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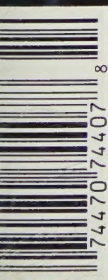
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INTERPRETING

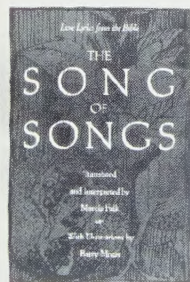
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LILITH

WINTER 1991 VOL. 16, NO. 1

FEATURES



p. 13



p. 16

NEW MEXICO'S SECRETS JEWS: IS IT SAFE TO TELL? by Maria Stieglitz

After nearly 500 years of whispered instructions passed down from mothers to daughters, some of the secret Jews who practiced Catholicism after the Spanish Inquisition are coming out of the closet to light their Shabbat candles in full view of their "Indian Catholic Jewish" families **8**

ROMANCE AND INTRIGUE IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND by Faye Kellerman

An excerpt from an enthralling historical novel, *The Quality of Mercy*, about a converso woman whose love affair with William Shakespeare threatens her family's double life at the court of Elizabeth I **11**

FROM OUR HEADS AND OUR HEARTS: CONNECTING WITH BLACK WOMEN by Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Can we be friends? Why do Jews need dialogue? Pogrebin tells about the years-long intimacy shared by a group of three Black and three Jewish women. She reveals how they agreed — and agreed to disagree — about politics, Israel, affirmative action and more **13**

MEMORIES OF MY LIFE IN A POLISH VILLAGE, 1930-1949 by Toby Knobel Fluek

Remarkable paintings, drawings and the artist's own narrative open a window onto life in a culture that is no more **16**

WISHING FOR "FATHER KNOWS BEST" A short story by Yona Zeldis McDonough

A young girl looks at her fracturing Jewish family through a lens tinted by sitcom American values **19**

DEPARTMENTS



p. 4



p. 29

FROM THE EDITOR

2

LETTERS

3

KOL ISHAH — WOMEN'S VOICES

4

News of skinhead women and Jew-hating; museum show focuses on Jewish women; Israeli women win victory on retirement age.

BODY AND SOUL

6

Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer tries to make sense of a Jew in Germany who converts to Catholicism, remains close to her family and perishes in Auschwitz. What spiritual quest drove her into the arms of the Church?

FOODCULTURE

22

Charlotte Margolis Goodman: "Back to the Kitchen, Part IV."

LILITH REVIEWS

24

New biographies from the radical twenties and the radical sixties, an answer to whether women were viewed as men's property in traditional Judaism, and fiction to cheer you through the winter.

ON AND OFF CAMPUS

29

Rachel Kadish tells about sexual harassment at Princeton.

TSENA-RENA

30

Resource listings for surviving the present.

THE WAYS WE ARE

32

Rabbi Rachel Cowan with what she's learned on how to bring life and love into a hospital room.

LILITH Marketplace

33

Cover photo by Doug Handel

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I've come to the conclusion that most Jews have the same problem I do in making explicit to others what being Jewish means to us. I've stumbled in this regard for years when I'd be asked by my children, or by journalists, "Why do you go to synagogue?" or "What do you actually believe in?" I do better with specific question that have answers formulated by others before me: Why the dog gets fed before the humans, why we give to someone begging on the street, and similar questions about daily living. But when the questions get more personal, and touch on what I myself believe, I often flounder.

I know I'm not alone in having trouble articulating what Judaism means to me because I've watched others struggle with the same problem (though sometimes in different contexts). For example, when I was interviewing couples for my book *Intermarriage* a couple of years ago, a young Catholic man who had promised his Jewish wife that they would raise their child a Jew was puzzled and hurt that she was reluctant to do "anything Jewish" with the little girl.

"Look," he pleaded, "If I didn't believe in Jesus Christ I wouldn't call myself a Christian. If you don't believe in God how can you call yourself a Jew?"

"What does believing in God have to do with any of this?" the woman snapped back, "I just want my kid to be Jewish."

For many Jews self-definition is a painful and often puzzling process. In an interfaith relationship, the Jewish partner must make explicit how she feels about her Jewish identity in ways that she never would have had to with another Jew. Even the terms of the dialogue feel as if they've been defined by others — Jews typically talk about practice (the things we do that shape our lives Jewish); Christians talk about belief, faith. Jewishness (rather than Judaism) is more than a religion, which is why so many of us wrestle with its multiple meanings in our lives today.

These questions about Jewish identity surfaced again and again as we were planning and editing the issue of LILITH you're now reading. Sometimes the articles in any issue crystallize themselves along a wire thread, a continuum representing a single theme. This time it is Jewish identity, explored here in three unusual pieces.

Our cover story is about "conversos" — women who, raised Catholic, are secret Jews, descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews forced to convert during the Inquisition. Those who are bold enough now to claim their Jewish roots are finding them entangled with strands from very different cultures, Hispanic and Native Indian among them.

To me a more troubling playing out of Jewish identity issues — and of how in the diaspora we define ourselves as distinct from the dominant Christian culture — is embodied here in the figure of Edith Stein, a Jew in Germany in the 1930's who became a nun and is now being considered for sainthood.

From a different tack altogether, comes a short story in which a young Jewish daughter confuses Jewish issues with her own complex family dynamics. In a stressed situation, she yearns for normalcy, imaging that Christian families are better able to live out the American ideal of domestic bliss presented in 1950's TV sitcoms.

In this issue we have marginal Jews — the conversos, reaching inward toward the core of Jewish life, a born-Jew who was pulled away from that center by the centrifugal forces of the Catholic church, plus a very American story about family upheaval which is linked in a daughter's mind to Jewish traits. While the subject matter — defining ourselves as Jews — is fascinating of itself, there's a special poignancy for women. We are expected (and often expect ourselves) to be the transmitters of Jewish culture to others yet our own identity issues are rarely explored, except in situations of crisis.

Susan

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LETTERS

THANKS FOR ATTENTION

Thank you for the copies of LILITH for our young men and women of the armed forces currently serving on the Saudi Arabian Peninsula.

I am sure that our women as well as at least a few of the men who will get the opportunity to read LILITH will find it useful, thought-provoking and enjoyable.

Rabbi Mitchell S. Ackerson
Fort Bragg NC

Editor's note: Books, magazines and letters may be sent to the estimated 900 Jewish soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia, care of Chaplain Mitchell, Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, NC 28307.

I write to you with very big hopes so far as I have a connection with the civilized world only through your magazine.

Very many people in the USSR love LILITH Magazine.

I would be very obliged to you if you don't mind to inform me of my relatives' address in your country.

I want to tell you the following: my relative is living in San Francisco for more than ten years; his name is Dagovich Abram Zelmanovich; he was born about 1926. His wife is Bella Abramovna Dagovich; she was born about 1930. If my petition from you is very difficult, please, inform me of the address where I can apply for help. I am waiting for your information with anxiety.

Mery Halzova
USSR

Editor's note: This letter was forwarded to HIAS in New York City.

able to reach those ill children that are in the hospital and/or home-bound and provide them with those services available.

Tizku L' Mitzvos (You should be privileged to perform good deeds).

Sheila Shmueli
Brooklyn NY

Editor's note: Readers wishing to donate to Gan Shoshana, can contact Shmueli at 952 E. 13th St., Brooklyn NY 11230, (718) 338-4816.

POLAND REVISITED

Yehudit Hendel's moving article about visiting Poland [Spring 1990] clarified an uneasy feeling I've had about recent events in Eastern Europe. Here one group throws off its shackles, then another, and then there is the loud and terrible silence of the Jews who are no longer part of these cultures.

For 40 years I have heard nothing about Vilnius, except when I have read history or fiction about Jews who once lived there. Now everyday I hear about Vilnius. But no Jews. While the Iron Curtain stood strong, it was as if all these cultures had been silenced along with the Jews of Eastern Europe. That seemed fair enough.

But now, these people get a chance to go on, to revive, fight back, make new choices. But the Jews of all these countries never will get this chance. This adds a painful twist to what seems to be, in other ways, a positive moment of power to the people.

Michele Clark
Plainfield VT

CREATING NEW RITUALS

In a letter to the editor in the Fall 1990 LILITH, Edward Fram wrote that "Hope Berger has inadvertently adopted a Christian view" when she reworded the second blessing of "Birkat Ha-Mazon" ["Bringing Feminism to

Camp Ramah," Summer 1990]" from *V'al b'ritkha she-hatamta biv'sareinu* to *V'al b'ritkha she-hatamta bilibeinu*.

I would like to direct Mr. Fram to review our own classical *JEWISH* sources where "circumcision of the heart" is part of the text: Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 and Jeremiah 4:4, and the "Musaf" service for Yom Kippur.

Edward Fram cites Rabbi Moses Isserles in the *Shulhan Arukh* and suggests that Ms. Berger "simply not recite this phrase" — the original version. On the contrary, Hope Berger should never allow her female voice and religious sensitivities to be quieted on this or any other occasion.

Suzanne Sobel
Cincinnati OH

I was particularly touched by Diane Solomon's "A Midwife's Kaddish" [Summer 1990]. While it is important and necessary to rediscover and reinterpret the feminine aspects of our tradition, it is even more gratifying and necessary in our times to *invent* ritual. What could be more fitting than Solomon's description of the ceremony she created to heal herself from her aborted pregnancy. Such ceremonies soften the blows life hands us while putting us in touch with our Jewish roots. Solomon is to be commended for her openness and moving writing.

Elaine Starkman
Walnut Creek CA

I am a Conservative Jew, and have recently taken on the *chiyuv* (obligation) of praying three times a day.

I was moved reading "... Who has made me a woman ..." by Elyse Goldstein [Spring 1990]. I too was bothered by the bracha "... who has not made me a woman," and also found the Conservative movement's rewrite (for both men and women: "who has made me in His image") a little

flat. Instead, every morning I say "who has made me a woman" and think especially of my special gift as a woman — the ability, whether or not I choose to exercise it, to bear life. When I feel pains during my menstrual periods, this *bracha*, part of my daily routine, reminds me of the privilege that goes along with the inconvenience. In this way and others, I see that Jewish women can and do incorporate positive images of femaleness into *tfilah* (prayer) and Torah.

Chana Abrams
Los Altos CA

I would like to suggest an addition to Elyse Goldstein's menstruation prayer. Etty Hillesum, whose memoirs have become a source of contemporary Torah for many women, and whose work was reviewed in LILITH [Spring 1989], wrote the following in 1941, just before her life was shattered by the Nazi invasion of her native Holland: "Oh God, I thank you for having created me as I am..." Her prayer continues, but the power of that first line, written without knowing the traditional prayer that she paraphrased, might be a fitting complement to Elyse's prayer.

Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell
Los Angeles CA

ADDENDUM

Omitted inadvertently from the article, "Women in the Pulpit: Reworking the Rabbi's Role" [Fall 1990] was Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi in the Reconstructionist Movement in 1974. Rabbi Sasso has shared the pulpit of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, Indianapolis, equally with her husband, Rabbi Dennis Sasso, since 1977.

Thank you very much for printing the article about the Gan Shoshana Lending Library for Children ["Tsena Rena," Fall 1990]. Hopefully with more kind people like you printing information about our library, we will be

KOL ISHAH

Women's Voices

SKINHEAD WOMEN SEND HATE MAIL TO U.S. TROOPS

Soldiers in Saudi Arabia are receiving anti-Semitic and racist mail courtesy of White Christian Women, a Las Vegas, Nevada group related to area skinheads.

Letters addressed to "Any Servicemember" or "Any White Servicemember" and signed by Casey Bangerter of the group state that American "men should not be in Iraq fighting Israel's battles!" Bangerter poses the question: "What will happen if the majority of the white American men die? I think I know; the white women in the U.S. will marry nonwhites," she answers.

In the most graphic of terms, Bangerter goes on to tell armed forces personnel that "Speaking for the white women, I know that we think that white men are the race of men that we want to have children with. The sweet little wisps of fair hair on pink baby skin are precious to me. I don't want to see my white friends having mixed babies."

Bangerter points out in her letter that her group respects "the other races and their cultures, with exception of the Jewish people. We hate their anti-Christ beliefs, . . . If only you knew about the Jewish control of America, I doubt that you would be fighting the war for the Jews in Israel!" She ends with the handwritten postscript: "I pray that you come home soon to protect the women and children who are left unprotected."

Bangerter told the *Las Vegas Review Journal and Sun* that she and four other women had been sending similar letters to ser-

vicemen in Saudi Arabia since U.S. troops had been deployed there in August. She claimed that the group had sent 7,000 letters to date.

According to Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), Casey Bangerter's group is allied with Christian Identity Skinheads, a group led by Johnny Bangerter. That group has been described by area police as a mix of "Christian bible-thumpers" and neo-Nazis. Indeed, when the *Las Vegas Review Journal and Sun* reporter visited the Bangerter house, he found "a living room draped in Nazi flags, posters and a giant bust of Adolf Hitler spray painted gold."

Mary Lynn Bangerter, Johnny's sister, explained to the reporter that the group did not intend violence against Jews and other minorities. "Our intent is to bring peace. But if they get in our way who knows what will happen."

The letters came to the attention of the ADL when a U.S. Marine Corps captain stationed in Saudi Arabia sent the letter to the Jewish War Veterans, who passed it on to the ADL. Foxman, who points out that the letters are a "brazen attempt to dishearten and create disunity among American troops," has asked Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney to "take steps to identify and intercept mailings addressed to 'white Servicemembers' in Saudi Arabia." Las Vegas police and the FBI have also been consulted.

—PG

ISRAEL HIGH COURT RULES FOR WOMEN IN DISCRIMINATION CASE

In a precedent-setting lawsuit, the organization that represents Israel's interests abroad has been found to have discriminated against a women employee.

Israel's High Court of Justice decided in October that the Jewish Agency had discriminated against Naomi Nevo when it required the sociologist to retire at 60 years of age in 1985, five years earlier than the requirement for men. This decision will have far-reaching implications in other matters of discrimination in Israel, as it discusses the very concept of discrimination.

While this decision does not change current law in Israel — the Knesset passed the Equal Retirement Age for Men and Women Law in 1987 — it presents a new approach to evaluating issues of discrimination. Justice Gavriel Bach pointed out that, in general, all persons were equal before the law unless there were "real and substantial differences between them which were relevant to the purpose to be achieved." In this case, he determined, there weren't. "To *force* them (women) to retire early, under modern conditions, just because they were women, was unjust and unreasonable discrimination, which was quite unacceptable."

Justice Bach found that Nevo "had been deprived of her basic rights of equality and freedom of occupation." Justice Shoshana Netanyahu concurred and expressed her regret that "in Israel, in our times, it was not clear and self-understood that forcing a woman to retire earlier than a man was unjust discrimination."

The Jewish Agency had argued that the purpose of the earlier retirement age for women, which had been regulated by collective bargaining agreements in effect since 1953, was to improve the position of women employees, not to worsen it. In contrast, Justice Bach ruled that earlier retirement conferred no benefit, but carried with it a number of disadvantages, both economic and emotional.



Because of the wording of this decision, experts in matters of civil rights in Israel believe that the doors are now open for other cases of discrimination to be brought before the courts. "There's fine language in the decision which should help in challenging other discrimination against women," explained New York activist Roger Herz. "The Feinsod Herz Fund continues to welcome proposals for funding to assist efforts, including litigation, to secure equal rights for women in Israel."

Nevo, who is now deputy chairwoman of the Israel Women's Network, was represented by Francis Raday, a professor of law at the Hebrew University, and Avigdor Feldman of the Association of Civil Rights in Israel. Funding for the long battle was provided by Philippa Strum and the American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition, the Feinsod Herz Fund and U.S./Israel Women to Women.

ISRAEL MUSEUM OPENS WOMEN'S GALLERY

Twenty-five years after the Israel Museum of Jerusalem brought the Vittorio Veneto Synagogue to its premises, the museum staff has finally utilized the previously closed women's gallery to house its first permanent exhibit of women's Judaica. Officially opened in April of this year, "A Woman of Valor" features ceremonial objects, books, manuscripts, textiles and paintings. The collection reflects the role of the women in Judaism: their contributions to communal life, women's literature and personal religious duties.

The exhibit is the brainchild of an entire cast of women. Sponsored by Rella Feldman and family in memory of Isar Levenstein, The Israel Museum Skirball Department of Judaica organized the project through the efforts of associate curator Daisy Raccach-Djiure, exhibition supervisor Iris Fishof and intern Tami Shadhi. There are no men serving in the administration of the Judaica Department.

In general, the exhibit seeks to portray aspects of both public and private lives of Jewish women and their love of Judaism in an attempt to remove the popular belief that Jewish women were historically only active at home caring for their families. The displays feature, for example, numerous ceremonial objects commissioned by women such as alms boxes, torah crowns, mantels, and finials, together with *siddurim* (prayer books), books of *techinot* (supplications) and the *tzena u'rena* (expanded Yiddish versions of the weekly Torah portions).

Also on view is the will of one Yemenite woman, Simhah daughter of David Siani, instructing that upon her death, her jewels are to be used to commission a new *sefer torah* to be donated to her synagogue. Museum visitors also see examples of the special

94-YEAR-OLD WOMAN UNITES RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS

When incoming Soviet refugee women were first invited to join the San Francisco chapter of Hadassah back in the late 1970's, they were convinced the offer was really a plot engineered by the KGB or the US government.

Today, the all-Russian group — the only group of its kind anywhere in the world — is over 300 strong, says its founder, Elaine Henderson.

"The group has absolutely transformed its members," she says. Most of the women felt utterly lost and frightened, when they first arrived in the US. "Besides being suspicious, they

had no understanding of our language and customs, and no knowledge of Judaism. The Russian women desperately needed a bridge between the two cultures. They needed a role model, someone they could identify with, a Russian woman who had been successful in adapting to American life."

That's where Eve Naftaly came in.

Naftaly, who is 94 years old, was born in Czarist Russia and fled with her family to Manchuria following the Russian revolution and, later, to the Philippines during World War II. After her husband and son were killed by the Japanese, she survived internment in a concentration camp and was brought to the United States.

Arriving in San Francisco with only the clothes on her back, Naftaly — who speaks seven languages — soon began teaching at Berlitz and later administered a hospital outpatient clinic. She joined Hadassah in 1960, and eventually became president of her group.

"It was absorbing and rewarding to be able to help these women learn the language and overcome their fears," recalls Naftaly. "For the first time in their lives, their individual voices count. They see that they can make a difference. "When they first arrived here, most of these women didn't believe that they could get the food they needed to put dinner on the table, let alone help others."



Courtesy Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Torah shield, dedicated by group of Turkish women, 1865

attention Jewish women would ever have given to Shabbat and holiday items such as tablecloths, candlesticks and even articles of clothing like the silk and velvet bonnet of a 19th century American Jewish woman. Of particular interest is a miniature keys casket, designed as a wedding present in 16th century Italy. The work, considered a Judaica masterpiece, depicts the women's *mitzvot* (commandments) of *challah*, *niddah*, and *hadlakat nerot* — the separating of a portion of bread in remembrance of the sacrifices in the Temple, maintaining the laws of ritual purity, and lighting Shabbat and holiday candles, respectively.

Although the exhibit is quite small, due to the limitations of the size of the women's gallery, it is a fair representation of women. Since the synagogue is no longer used for prayer services — in fact, it is filled with the sounds of baroque period music — it is easily accessible to both men and women through an external staircase leading to the lobby before the main synagogue doors. Along with the wide assortment of museum pieces are several photographs showing North American women clothed in ritual garments conducting a *torah* service. A woman's *kippah* (skullcap), lent by Rabbi Shoshana Laemmle, is displayed beside the

rabbinic *s'micha* (ordination) certificate of Hebrew Union College 1985 graduate Rabbi Karyn D. Keoar. According to Raccach-Djiure, the museum staff "felt obligated to remind the public that change has occurred and is happening now. Today things once forbidden are possible."

Highlights of the exhibit also include unusual pieces demonstrating little known facts of the Jewish women's experience. It is not common knowledge, for instance, that European community leaders endorsed Jewish women to serve as *shochetot* (ritual slaughterers). One of the "jewels in the crown" of the exhibit, tells Raccach-Djiure, is the slaughtering certificate of Bella Donna Gallichi, dated 1684 in Sienna, Italy. "We can assume that granting women this right was common practice in Italy, but it is not well documented," states Raccach-Djiure. The 1890 certificate of Elvira Finzi reveals that the practice continued until recent times.

"The challenge of the exhibit is that it is very small," adds Raccach-Djiure, "but it opens a way to emphasize the importance of the activities of Jewish women."

— Lisa Klug



Edith Stein

SISTER EDITH STEIN A RABBI REACTS

by Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer

Edith Stein was an extraordinary philosopher and mystic who died at Auschwitz at the age of 51. Although she faced lifelong discrimination as both a woman and a Jew, she was able to establish herself as an accomplished German academic — the prize student and assistant to the great phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. In Germany today, the name “Edith Stein” is everywhere: schools, libraries and streets bear her name.

By all accounts, Stein was a woman with a deep and luminous soul. “From the moment I met her, I knew: here is someone truly great,” said a Dutch official at the Nazis’ Westerbork camp, echoing an almost universal sentiment. “Talking with her was like . . . journeying into another world.”

Hundreds of people pilgrimaged to Stein for spiritual guidance. “I find great happiness,” Stein wrote, “whenever someone arrives here all worn out and battered, and then goes away with a measure of consolation.” A friend corroborates Stein’s sentiment: “The more wretched a person was, the more pleasure [Edith] felt in seeking him out as one of God’s favorites.”

Still, Stein’s life-choices complicate a Jewish effort to understand her, because not only was she an adult convert to Catholicism, but in 1933 she became a nun in the Carmelite order. The Catholic Church (interpreting Stein’s martyrdom at

Auschwitz in its own fashion) recently beatified her, and in time, she may be canonized.

I found myself reading a recent biography (written by another Carmelite sister), *Edith Stein: A Biography*, by Waltraud Herbstrith (Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1985), with a confusing mix of emotions. On the one hand, I felt proud of this intellectual, spiritually gifted woman. On the other, as someone seeking Jewish women role models, I felt abandoned and betrayed. Her baptism in particular — in an era of such extreme Jewish vulnerability — feels almost like an act of treachery.

Why *did* Edith Stein turn to Christianity? As the eleventh child of a family headed by a pious Jewish woman who was widowed shortly after Edith’s birth, Stein and her family struggled against enormous financial and emotional odds. Like her daughter after her, Stein’s mother had a strength-giving faith in God that sustained her through difficulties.

As an adult, Stein — a devoted daughter, sister and aunt — struggled for many years with the wrenching incompatibility of the joy she found in Christianity and the pain she was causing her family. Even after her conversion, she loyally attended Jewish holiday services with her family; she wrote loving, weekly letters to her mother. Although the intensity of the bond between Stein and her mother raises more questions

than it resolves, this biographer would have us dismiss the hypothesis that Stein left Judaism in order to separate from her family-of-origin.

Converts from Judaism often wish to abandon what they perceive as a narrow and parochial community, but this was not the case for Stein. She always considered herself a proud member of the Jewish people and she admired traditional Jewish life. Immediately upon entering the convent, Stein began her autobiography with the purpose, she said, of educating readers about Judaism and thus combatting anti-Semitism.

In 1933, Stein requested a private papal audience (it was declined) in the hopes of convincing the Pope to take action on behalf of Jews, and she referred to herself (using a Jewish metaphor long after she became a Christian) as being like “Queen Esther, separated from her people just so she could intercede before the King.” While this role was not the catalyst for her conversion, it certainly underscores that Stein was not fleeing Jewish identity. When Stein and her biological sister (also a convert) were taken from the convent to Westerbork, she said, “Come, Rosa, we are going for our people.”

As a university student, Stein, enchanted with secularism, studied psychology and philosophy and gave up Jewish religious practice. Soon, however, she found herself among a circle of university intellectuals who were questioning the orthodoxies of science, rationality and philosophy. The first religious books to capture her adult interest were by medieval Catholics, beginning with the mysticism of Theresa of Avila, whose autobiography Stein discovered on a friend’s shelf and stayed up all night to read.

Personal encounters were also important factors in her journey towards Catholicism. Once she visited an empty cathedral

into which a lone woman entered, Stein wrote, "as if to talk to a friend." A meeting with a young, grieving Catholic widow revealed to Stein how "the Cross triumphs over the sting of death." Finally, the cloistered life of the Carmelite sisters was immensely attractive to her. The structure of contemplation and work made her "radiantly happy," providing her with the "transcendent tranquility" that she sought.

There is a school of thought that holds Christianity to be a religion of love and interiority, and Judaism more strictly a religion of law and duties. Was Stein drawn then to the Church because of these "Christian" qualities? It appears not. For Stein, the love she felt for God and the interior depths she cultivated came to fruition through a commitment to a highly exacting regime of law (that of the nuns), as well as specific daily acts of kindness and devotion in the private and public sphere. In fact, Stein's very life teaches how inadequate this alleged dichotomy is.

On the subject of death, Stein clearly preferred a Christian view over a Jewish one. Three years before her death, she wrote, "I joyfully accept in advance the death which God has appointed for me" — an attitude towards death that is uncongenial to Judaism's "life" orientation. True, Stein's biographer may well have exaggerated the extent to which Stein's martyrdom was voluntary. Also true, Judaism has a concept of *kiddush hashem* (dying to sanctify God). Nevertheless, I believe Stein was correct in understanding that her own approach to death was more consonant with Christianity than with Judaism.

The question that remains for me as a Jew is whether and how Stein sought spiritual nourishment from Judaism before she turned to Christianity. Unfortunately, this question is not important to Stein's biographer, so we have little information on the matter. We do know that Stein wrote to an Orthodox Jewish friend asking whether he believed in a personal God and that the man's answer — brief and lacking in emotional content ("God is Spirit — there is nothing more to be said") — felt to Stein "as if I had been given a stone instead of bread."

But did she seek further in Judaism? Did she read the Baal Shem Tov or Maimonides? Did she know of Martin Buber? Did she attend the Frankfurt Lehrhaus where a brilliant renaissance of Jewish

learning was occurring at the very same time as her conversion? This we don't know.

I suspect that Stein's being a woman had something to do with the direction of her spiritual journey. When Franz Rosenzweig was a young philosopher about to abandon Judaism (according to the theory of Nahum Glatzer), he visited an Orthodox *shul* on the eve of Yom Kippur and was awakened to the spiritual depth of his native religion. But would Franz Rosenzweig have remained a Jew if he had been hurried upstairs to sit behind a *mehitza* that fateful night? Frankly, I doubt it.

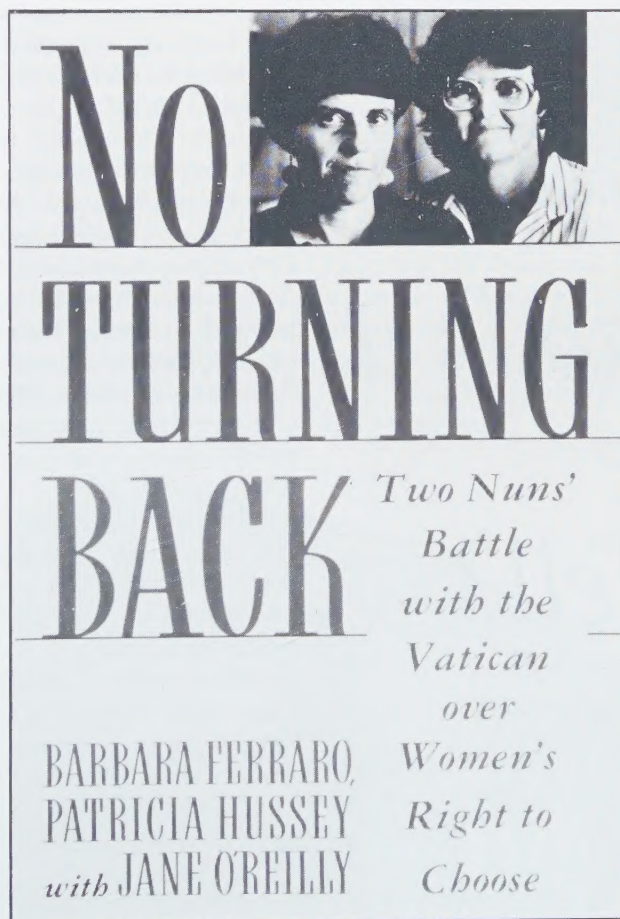
It seems hardly a coincidence that the book that decisively turned Stein toward faith was written by a woman — Theresa of Avila. Does a female author of similar stature exist within the Jewish spiritual canon? No. The life with women to which Stein was ultimately attracted — the paradoxically restricted and liberated life of the cloistered nun — has no parallel in the Jewish world. The tremendous focus on family which is so characteristic of Jewish life may have made it even more difficult for a single, 30-year-old, female philosopher to find adequate models within Judaism.

Continued on page 28

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—Barbara Ehrenreich



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New Mexico's Secret Jews

by Maria Stieglitz



Doug Handel

Anna Rael Delay

*Now is it
Safe
to Tell?*

Growing up in Santa Fe in the 1950's and 1960's, Anna and Celina Rael watched their maternal grandmother light Friday night candles and listened to their father say a blessing before he butchered sheep, carefully removing the sciatic nerve.

When the sisters and their two younger brothers visited their grandmother's house, she always asked them what they had eaten earlier to make sure that they wouldn't mix meat and milk while eating at her house. Every spring, right before Holy Week, Anna and Celina's mother cleaned the kitchen cabinets, their Grandmother Pino covered her tables and cabinets, and the entire family ate "gaitas," a flat, cracker-like bread. Mr. Rael and one of his sons have a lactose intolerance, a genetic disease common to Sephardic Jews.

All the boys in the family were circumcised by a doctor when they were eight-days old. Babies of both sexes were given coral jewelry to ward off the evil eye, recalls Anna, who wore a coral ring and bracelet as a child. And in the two cemeteries where the Rael and Pinos are buried, a star of David, menorahs, and the Hebrew letter "shin" are engraved on many of the family tombstones.

None of this is at all unusual except for the fact that Anna and Celina were raised as Catholics.

Because most of their neighbors on Agua Fria Street practiced the same customs, neither sister questioned them. It

wasn't until Anna was in high school and began reading popular novels by Jewish authors on Jewish themes that she noticed the similarities between the rituals she was reading about and those practiced by her family.

"I'd say, 'Hey, we do that!'" said Anna. But she had no idea why. It's quite likely that the Rael, Pinos and their neighbors (many of whom have Jewish surnames) are descendants of conversos — Spanish and Portuguese Jews who converted to Catholicism in order to survive the Inquisition 500 years ago, but who, in the safety of their own homes, secretly continued to live as Jews. Often called marranos, a derogatory name meaning pig in Spanish, they are more respectfully known as crypto-Jews, secret Jews, and conversos.

What few people know is that the Spanish Inquisition was not confined to the Old World. In the 1590's, it took hold in Mexico, too. Many converso families who had fled to Mexico seeking safety fled again — this time to New Mexico. The same names which appear on the Mexican Inquisition's "wanted" list also show up on the roster of the first white people to settle northern New Mexico. The Rael have been in New Mexico since 1610.

Conversos often lived together in small villages, marrying each other in order to preserve their religion, and practicing Judaism in the privacy of their own homes.

One way that conversos could recognize each other was by their surnames. Rael, for example, is believed to be an abbreviation of Israel. Often, says Celina Rael de Garcia, people have said to her, "Oh, you're a Rael; you're Jewish."

In 1981, shortly after New Mexico's state historian Stanley Hordes assumed his position, he began receiving regular visits from people who would come to his office and tell him things like, "So-and-so doesn't eat pork," or "So-and-so lights candles on Friday night." Intrigued, Hordes, an Ashkenazic Jew, began interviewing the people who were doing these "unusual" things and tracing their family histories through public records. He concluded that a converso population has been living in northern New Mexico for nearly 400 years.

"Conversos range from direct biological descendants of original conversos, to people who practice rituals but don't even know those rituals are Jewish," says Hordes. "Some live in organized converso communities in northern New Mexico, others don't."

Ben Shapiro, a radio and film producer who interviewed approximately 70 conversos for his 1988 radio documentary, "The Hidden Jews of New Mexico," says that despite many marriages among converso families, "there's no physical resemblance among them." Very few have pure, Jewish genealogy, Anna Rael Delay concurs, adding that members of her own family range from dark-skinned, brown-eyed brunettes to light-skinned, blue-eyed blondes.

Why, after centuries of secrecy, do some conversos — especially those in their thirties and forties — want to talk? Hordes, who has spoken to dozens of people who suspect they're Jewish, believes that they, like many other Americans their age, are searching for their roots, and they finally feel secure enough to do so. Still, appointments between conversos and both Hordes and Shapiro are often broken.

Says Hordes, "After 500 years of keeping a secret, you don't just start blabbing about it."

Fear of anti-Semitism is another reason for secrecy. "Living in a small, Catholic, rural town, it's hard to suddenly say that you're Jewish," said Shapiro. "Besides, secrecy is an important element of their culture."

Perceived as Catholics, conversos fear losing their jobs or customers if the predominantly Catholic northern New Mexico population learns that they are Jewish. (Approximately 1,500 of Santa Fe's 56,000 residents are Jewish, says Hordes.) Also, many conversos have grown up feeling socially excluded from mainstream America because they are Chicanos; to be both Chicano and overtly Jewish would, they believe, make acceptance and assimilation virtually impossible.

Interestingly, women more than men are the ones who keep up Jewish customs, and grandmothers are the strongest repository of knowledge. Many people remember their grandmothers telling them secrets about Jewish folkways. The name Esther is extremely common among converso women, taken from the historical Queen Esther, who saved her people by pretending not to be Jewish.

What follows are the reflections of three converso women: Anna Rael Delay, her sister Celina Rael de Garcia, and their mother, Juanita Pino Rael.

Anna Rael Delay, 44, and Celina Rael de Garcia, 42, the oldest of Florentino and Juanita Rael's five children, grew up in an adobe house on the outskirts of Santa Fe. Their father is a carpenter and adobe house builder; their mother is a state employee. Although Anna says that her family wasn't particularly religious, Mrs. Rael insists, "We were very devoutly Catholic."

Like the other families on Agua Fria Street, Anna and Celina's maternal grandparents, Felix and Vivianita Pino, were subsistence farmers and owned several acres which they shared with their two children. The "family compound" included three houses: the Pinos', the Rael's and that of Anna and Celina's aunt and uncle. When it was mealtime, the grandchildren ate at whichever house they happened to be at, said Celina, who lived with her grandparents until she was 13, when her grandmother died.

The Pinos came to New Mexico from Mexico City in the 1850's, and were once large landowners, as were many conversos, said Celina. Although her grandfather was, like his own father and grandfather, an educated man who had studied at St. Michael's College in New Mexico and read and wrote about the Bible, he didn't tell his granddaughter why the family had certain traditions.

"There were many unexplained customs," said Celina, an outgoing, energetic woman who works as a management consultant. She remembers playing with four-sided, hand-carved, wooden tops that had "take all," "put back," "take one" and "nothing" written on the sides in Spanish, but she didn't know that it was a *dreidel*. Her father taught her how to butcher an animal in the kosher Sephardic style — extracting the sciatic nerve — but last December when she and Anna asked him why he did it this way, he couldn't tell them. He truly doesn't know why. And, says Celina, "All of northern New Mexico eats kosher meat!"



Model of 13th century synagogue in Toledo, Spain

Courtesy Yeshiva University Museum

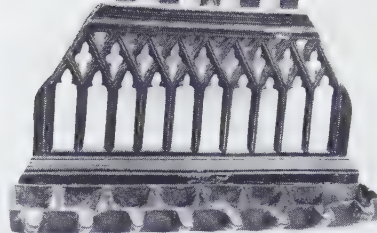
When she was growing up, people often told Celina, “Rael’s are Jewish.” Years later, her husband, Joe, a “cultural Catholic” would look at the Rael’s and say, “You guys are a bunch of Jews.” This puzzled them. A branch of Joe’s family, the Salmerons, have Stars of David engraved on their tombstones.

Celina’s memory of her reaction to these remarks varies. Sometimes she tuned it out “because I had no idea what it meant to be Jewish;” other times she recalls having “some sense of pride” and thinking, “Oh yeah, how neat that I might be Jewish! Because I saw it more from a Biblical point of view — I’d seen pictures of shepherds and Bible movies. I certainly didn’t in any way identify myself with Ashkenazic Jews living in Santa Fe.”

Celina’s sister, Anna, a bilingual elementary education teacher, distinctly remembers going to a restaurant in Mexico with her family and having the waiter tell them that they “looked Jewish.” She accepted such comments without introspection. Talking about conversos “was a hush-hush” she said. She never asked the nuns questions about her family’s customs during the three years that she attended parochial school. “I was afraid to,” she said, but she doesn’t exactly know why.

Since about fifteen of the Catholic families on Agua Fria Street did the same things as the Pinos and Rael’s, the sisters grew up assuming that these customs derived somehow from being Hispanic Catholics with Indian blood. (Their maternal great-grandmother was a Pueblo Indian.) Clearly the family’s style was to accept, not analyze. When an “Anglo” teacher began asking questions about the students’ family customs, Celina remembers that her Grandmother Pino said “don’t tell! They’ll take it apart. What is, is.” Her grandmother wasn’t trying to hide anything, Celina insists — she simply wanted to reserve their distinctly “non-Anglo” way of life.

Today, both sisters believe that many of the families in the neighborhood, like their own, were conversos, but that few, if any, were actually aware of their Jewish roots. After 400 years of assimilating into northern New Mexico’s increasingly entwined Catholic, Hispanic and Indian cultures, this is understandable. As Celina said, if her brothers had become bar-mitzvah, “I probably would have thought it was an



15th century bronze Chanukah menorah

Courtesy Yeshiva University Museum

Indian rite of passage.” Conversos who are now actively exploring their Jewish roots, seeking each other out and agreeing to be interviewed by journalists and cultural historians, comprise a very small segment of the population.

Discovering, acknowledging and accepting their Jewish ancestry has been “an evolving process” for both Rael sisters. Because they grew up in a Spanish-speaking home in a rural community that was both physically and psychologically isolated from mainstream America, the sisters had virtually no knowledge of Judaism nor contact with American Jews. It was all but impossible for them to know that their family practiced Jewish customs. The rare “informed” comments by fellow Chicanos concerning converso culture seemed so peculiar and dissonant to them that it was easy to let the comments pass.

Books provided the first hardcore evidence. In high school and college Anna and Celina read novels by popular Jewish authors, such as Chaim Potok and Cynthia Freeman. Anna remembers thinking, “Gee, we do that!” or, “My grandparents did that!” when the authors described certain rituals.

In college, she wrote a paper on James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, entitled “The Wandering Jew Blooms.” “Bloom wasn’t accepted by anyone,” said Anna. “I could identify with him, trying to be accepted, wandering around, not knowing where you are or are going. I was always trying to find a place, searching. I used to think it was just puberty, but now I think it was more.”

Celina said she was always drawn to Jewish subjects, particularly the Holocaust. “I’ve always had a real affinity for all things Jewish,” she said, “I can’t explain it. The fact that people persevered and survived is a wonderful thing.”

In the 1960’s, many Jewish hippies came to Santa Fe and later, a sizeable contingent of Jewish artists and retirees from New York settled there. A self-proclaimed rebel, Celina met the newcomers at work and socialized with them at

meetings of New Jewish Agenda, an organization which supports liberal causes. These associations, plus trips out of state, made her more aware of the similarities between her family’s customs and Judaism. Still she didn’t consider herself Jewish.

It was not until she was a teenager that the soft-spoken Anna began sharing her feelings and suspicions about family customs with Celina. As “the pieces fell together,” she said, “it felt really right.” Ten years ago she started to think about converting to Judaism. Last December she finally began the conversion process with a Reform rabbi in Santa Fe. “Conversion is making me feel complete,” said Anna. “Before I felt as though I was walking through a grey shadow and now I’m coming into the light.”

Last spring Anna attended her first Passover *seider*. Her 11-year-old son, Nicholas, often attends services with her, and her husband, Charles, a non-observant Methodist, supports her decision, as does her family.

Her father, who considers himself a Catholic, said to her supportively, “You do what you need to do,” and wished her good luck. Celina encouraged her, and on Rosh Hashana, her older brother called to wish her a happy New Year. Her mother and youngest brother are accepting, too. “It’s Anna’s choice,” said her younger brother. “I don’t hold it against her.” Still, when her mother first learned of her conversion, Anna sensed that she seemed afraid.

“Mrs. Rael is very typical of her generation, many of whom feel it isn’t safe to be publicly Jewish,” explains Hordes. Although she seemed surprised at Anna’s decision (“Anna was a better Catholic than all of us put together. She said the rosary every night”), Mrs. Rael never asked her daughter why she was converting because, “I didn’t want her to get mad . . . Anna told me she had been thinking about converting for a long time. She’s old enough to know what she’s doing. I don’t want to stop her from doing what she wants to do.”

Last September, Anna participated in a panel on “The Converso Experience in Portugal and the United States” at the 1990 American Sephardi Federation Convention in Chicago. Stanley Hordes, playwright Rina Downs, and two rabbis were also on the

Continued on page 12

Romance and Danger in Elizabethan England

by Faye Kellerman

In 1589, Dr. Roderigo Lopez, a Portuguese converso and personal physician to Queen Elizabeth I, was executed for treason. The story of his daughter and her conflicts over her secret identity is fictionalized in the novel The Quality of Mercy.

"Did you happen to leak out any other family secrets?"

Rebecca blushed and said, "No."

"You told him, eh?" the hag said coldly.

"No!" Rebecca started to cry. "Yes . . . I mean no. I told him nothing that would do us in. I swear to you, Grandmama, we mostly bespoke soft words of love."

"What did you tell him, for God's sake?"

"I . . . once told him . . . 'twas the first time we were together in the city. He . . . he thinks we're secret Papists."

"Good Lord —"

"It doesn't matter to him." Rebecca pulled a lace handkerchief from her purse and dried her tears. "Grandmama, the North is full of secret Papists."

"So you did no harm by telling your Willy that we're Papists, eh, Rebecca?"

"Calm yourself, Grandmama," Rebecca begged.

The old woman released Rebecca's shoulders. She folded her skeletal hands into fists, tears streaming from her eyes. Rebecca held the old woman, feeling such deep love for her. She knew how much her grandam had suffered for her religious beliefs, how she'd been imprisoned in the Old Country. But England was not Portugal, and she told the old woman this.

"No one is going to burst into our house and arrest us because of our silent prayers!" Rebecca said. "Our queen wouldn't allow it."

"You think the English would show sympathy to the Jew?"

"The nobility knows our bloodline. They know that Solomon Aben Ayesh — the Jewish Duke — is our uncle. The Queen entertains him royally. They don't care what we do in private."

"Not yet?"

"Grandmama," Rebecca said. "I pray you to believe me. Shakespeare can keep a secret."

"Let me tell you something about secrets, Becca," Grandmama said angrily. "I spent eight years of my life in a Portuguese dungeon because my sister could not keep secrets. It happened Yom Kippur, of all days, and my spoiled sister did not desire to fast as ordained by God. In a tearful fit of anger at my parents, she informed her Viejo Christian lover that her family was forcing her to starve. She went on to explain our old customs to him. On our fast days we greased our utensils and trenchers to make it appear as though we'd eaten. That we secretly changed the bed linens on Friday day. And you know what her drunken scum lover did? He went and reported us to his priest. We were all arrested, including my sister, who was shown leniency only because she'd borne witness against her parents. Ah, but God wrought a final revenge on her soul. She was forced to

watch her parents sizzle on the stake — roasted and blackened like lambs on a spit. All because she could not keep secrets!"

Rebecca covered her mouth. Never had grandmama spoken so openly about her wretched experiences in the Old Country.

"Shall I tell you about my life in a dungeon, Becca?" the hag continued in a hoarse whisper.

Rebecca said nothing. Her body began to shake. She knew she was about to hear something terrible.

Grandmama said, "You're a woman who has yearned to be a man. Now act like one and listen. I'll tell you what your father and Uncle Jorge have told your brother and cousins."

She spoke softly as Rebecca rocked her. She explained that after her entire family was arrested, the men of the Holy Office tried to extract a confession of Judaizing from her. When she refused, they resorted to their torture.

"First they tied my wrists behind my back, attached my bound hands to a *strappado* — a pulley — and hoisted me off the floor. Left me dangling like a cobweb on the ceiling for hours, Becca. Finally the men of the tribunal felt me ready to confess. They lowered me to the ground and brought over a scribe, urged me to admit my guilt before them and God. I spat in their faces and resisted. The Inquisitor grew very angry. He attached weights to my ankles and once again raised me to the ceiling.

"When the *strappado* could not bring out from me the evidence against my friends, the Holy Office tried the *aselli*. I was laid naked upon a trestle table that had running across it sharp-edged rungs. They cut slowly, first into the shoulders, then the arse, then the thighs and calves, finally the back almost to the spine. I still bear the scars, girl!"

Rebecca covered her face and trembled. The hag lay her bony hand atop her granddaughter's shoulder.

"Eight hundred years our people lived in Iberia, Becca! Eight hundred years! And now our ways, our houses of prayer are gone! Destroyed! And those who try to secretly practice our old ways are ferreted out and burnt. *Our* mission is one of the few hopes they have left. We provide them a route of escape, with papers and a country willing to accept them. And even once they settle elsewhere, they, as secret or open Jews, are never safe.

"We reside here in England and live as secret Jews only to help those in Iberia escape from the jaws of the Holy See," the hag continued. "The men in our family put their lives in great peril, sneaking on ships, working countless hours to accumulate gold that is given to the monarchs to keep them quiet. You must do your part and cause your father no more pain."

"As God is my witness, I'll be a dutiful daughter."

Faye Kellerman is a Los Angeles-based novelist and mystery writer.

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panel, and several hundred people attended the session.

"It was wonderful!" said Anna. "I came away feeling really good." It was the first time she had been among Sephardic Jews and petite Anna, with her dark hair, dark skin, and hazel eyes felt an immediate rapport with the other conventioners because of their similar physical appearance. "They look just like me," she said.

There was also a cultural connection. "It felt familiar — like weddings back home. They were a lot warmer, more receptive, and open" than the Ashkenazic members of the Santa Fe synagogue she had been attending.

After Anna finished her presentation at the conference there was much applause and even hugs. The only sour note was one rabbi's statement that only Orthodox conversions are acceptable to Sephardic Jews. With characteristic directness and self-confidence, Anna responded, "Well, the way we feel is the way we feel. I'll do what's right for me."

Before the conference, Anna considered herself a Jew. Now, she says, she identifies with Sephardic Jews. "The conference clarified things for me."

As for Celina, her religious evolution has had a different course from her sister's. Living in El Ancon, a small farming community 45 miles south of Santa Fe, Celina doesn't go to church (although she attended regularly until she was in sixth grade) or participate in Jewish services or rituals. Acknowledging her Jewish identity began, she said, when a cousin went to a conference and came back saying that more and more things indicate that the Rael's are Jewish. Anna's growing interest in Judaism also influenced Celina, and about eight years ago she began to search more actively for her Jewish roots. "There's a big question mark. I need to know. There's a sense of incompleteness until you pursue it."

Unlike Anna, Celina wants to integrate Judaism into her Catholic and Indian identity. Discovering her Jewish ancestry has been "kind of overwhelming," she says, and she still considers herself a "cultural Catholic." "I've no denial, but there's a defensiveness. In New Mexico there are a lot of negative attitudes about Jews. My mother only heard about the negative aspects of Judaism. Somewhere our linkage to Judaism ended and we bought into negativity."

Her defensiveness may also be a result of being a non-Anglo in an Anglo country. By her own admission, she's "hostile" when it comes to "Anglo" culture; for her, "American" culture and northern New Mexico's Hispanic-Indian culture are mutually exclusive. So while she's willing to expand her identity to include Judaism, she is not willing to do so at the cost of relinquishing other parts of her identity. "I guess I'm looking for a 'Jews for Jesus' type of thing," she explains. On the other hand, her 19-year-old son is quite clear about the family's religious identity: "We're Jewish Catholic Indians!" he says proudly.

Identifying Jewish aspects of the family's history isn't easy. Which memories are relevant and should be checked out? What about the things which you don't remember but may be important? What do you do when someone else's memories contradict yours?

"It's hard to know what's Jewish," admits Celina. She remembers her grandfather and other men wearing little pouches under their clothing, and grandmother pinning an "almohadita" (little pillow) onto the front of her dress. Could the little pouches be phylacteries? wondered Celina. Could the men have worn them under their clothing because, in origin, they had to keep them hidden? Maybe, thought Celina. But then her brother reported that the Indians wear pouches to ward off evil spirits.

Anna says that all the boys in her family were circumcised eight days after birth. Celina said this only began after Jewish doctors moved to Santa Fe. Who is right and what does it mean? Who requested the circumcision and for what reason?

Anna also reports that gifts of coral rings and bracelets were given to newborn babies to protect them from evil spirits. She thinks this is a Jewish custom, but doesn't know why. She just knows that her family and others on the street did it and that she wore a coral bracelet and ring as a child.

Celina remembers that during Holy Week, families on Agua Fria Street brought food to each other's houses, like the Purim custom of *shlach manot*. Later she learned that Catholic communities outside of northern New Mexico didn't do this. Does that make it a Jewish or converso custom?

Anna is sometimes vague and unable to remember certain facts, such as what she thought when someone made a statement about her being Jewish, or what books she had read. Celina sometimes contradicts herself. To this writer, these lacunae and inconsistencies were frustrating, until Hordes said confirmingly that these behaviors are typical. The sisters are just beginning to examine things that once seemed ordinary. The real becomes unreal, the unreal real. One's own life becomes a giant perceptual puzzle.

The only way to know which customs are truly Jewish, or converso, says Hordes, is to collect as much information as possible from as many conversos as possible and compare the facts. If the majority received coral jewelry when they were born, and Catholics didn't, then it's probably a converso custom.

In the meantime, Anna, newly living in Dallas, lights Shabbat candles, plans to join a Sephardic synagogue and to learn Hebrew, and she reports feeling centered and happy.

Her sister, Celina, roaming her childhood neighborhood, seeks out those who may be able to answer her troubling questions. Recently a woman told Celina that men in her converso husband's family wore large black hats indoors. Click!: Celina remembers her Grandfather Pino wearing a large, black hat indoors (similar to the one's Hasidim wear)! He also drank Mogen David wine.

The sisters' mother, Juanita Pino Rael — the third woman in this portrait — remains steadfast in her Catholicism. Despite certain facts — her mother's maiden name was Silva, a common converso name, and her father, she said, spoke Portuguese, which was the everyday language of Mexican conversos — Mrs. Rael denies having Jewish roots. Says Anna, "My mother, no matter what, says 'We're not Jewish.' That's her prerogative." "It's denial," corrects Celina, matter-of-factly.

When asked why her parents and she observed certain customs, Mrs. Rael responds, "There were Jewish people who were shepherders and my father was a shepherd. He learned customs from the Jews."

Maria Stieglitz is a freelance writer based in Sea Cliff, NY.

FROM OUR HEADS
AND OUR HEARTS

CONNECTING WITH BLACK WOMEN

BY LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN



Andrea Sperling

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, left, and Harriet Michel

It was a summer evening in 1984, the day after the Democratic National Convention nominated Geraldine Ferraro as Walter Mondale's vice presidential running mate. A woman vice president! In our lifetime! I couldn't have been happier if my mother had been commemorated on a postage stamp. After work, I bounded up to the apartment for a get-together of our Black-Jewish women's group. I could hardly wait to share my ecstasy with my pals.

In the six-woman Black-Jewish dialogue group that Harriet Michel and I had founded, we discussed Geraldine Ferraro's brand-new nomination.

Besides Harriet, who was then director of the New York Urban League, two other African-American women were in our group — Bernice Powell, then president of the New York Coalition of 100 Black Women (now executive associate to the president of the United Church of Christ); and Marguerite Ross Barnett, then vice-chancellor of the City University of New York (now chancellor of the University of Houston). Besides myself, the two other Jewish women with the dialogue were Marilyn Braveman, then director of education and women's issues for the American Jewish Committee, and Jacqueline

Levine, past president of the National Jewish Community Relations Council and vice president of the American Jewish Congress.

Our group had originated as a spin-off of a larger, coed Black-Jewish coalition composed of New York City movers and shakers. Because the male members seemed incapable of talking personally, of exposing their vulnerabilities, or of making real human connection, the group had degenerated into power-posturing and speech-making. Finally Harriet and I, who had been grimacing to each other across the room for months, decided to convene a small, all-women's group. So here the six of us were, toasting Geraldine Ferraro, bubbling with enthusiasm as we reviewed our impressions of her acceptance speech and the prospects for the Democratic ticket.

After a few minutes, however, I noticed that the three Black women in the group were not bubbling quite as effervescently as the three Jewish women.

"How come you guys aren't so excited?" I asked the Blacks. "Is there something wrong with Ferraro?"

I wasn't being rude: directness is one of our ground rules.

"She's white," answered all three Blacks, almost simultaneously.

"But she's a woman, like you, like us," said one of the Jews.

"But she's white."

"Yeah, she's also Catholic and not a Jew but I still feel her achievement as my own," said a Jewish woman. "I think to myself if an Italian Catholic woman can do it, maybe someday a Jewish woman can be in the White House."

"It's a big leap from a white Catholic to a Black of any kind," said another Black member.

"But this is a tremendous breakthrough for the American political system. If Gerry can be the candidate of a major party, you could be too," said a Jewish woman, gesturing toward the Blacks, all of whom are prominent enough in public life to run for office.

"Not so!" was the reply. "And that's the point. The woman in me is glad for Gerry but the Black in me has no greater political possibilities today than last week. Gerry's success won't help my people one bit."

In the midst of my celebratory raptures my African-American friends forced me to change my angle of vision, to alter my strictly feminist orientation and acknowledge a critical difference between Black women's marginalization and mine. Whereas it depends on the political and social climate of the moment as to whether I feel more vulnerable as a Jew or a woman, the oppression of color and class always outweighs the oppression of gender or religion. In a white-run society, racism is the overriding injustice; it does not allow invisibility, or passing.

I turned the situation around and saw their point even more clearly. If a Jewish *man* had been nominated as Walter Mondale's running mate, I would have felt pleased and proud but I would not have been popping my cork. Jew or not, I would have seen it as a *man's* triumph and thus familiar. His victory would not have greased the track for a Jewish woman or any woman. Likewise, Ferraro would not ease the way for any Black, male or female.

If our women's group works harder at decoding causes and goes deeper into the realm of feelings than the other dialogue groups I'm familiar with, it's because we all consider ourselves feminists as well as advocates of our own communities. We are interested in one another not just as Blacks or Jews, but as women. While we are not afraid of male-style confrontation, we are more devoted to female-style communication, down-and-dirty mutual self-disclosure and emotional honesty.

I have learned that although I see myself as a Jewish woman, Blacks see me as a white woman. I have had to admit that I see Blacks as Black before I think of them as Christian. I have bounced back after hearing some of the infuriating opinions Blacks have of Jews, and I have gotten off my chest some racial hostility I wouldn't have dared to confess anywhere else.

JESSE JACKSON



At the victory rally the night David Dinkins won the New York City Mayoral primary, Jesse Jackson made a speech that contained a number of gratuitous Christian religious references. The next day, I asked

a Black friend, "Since Jews supported Dinkins in greater proportions than any other group of whites, don't you think all that Jesus talk was pretty insensitive of Jackson?"

The Black woman's face closed tight as a fist. "You're not gonna get me to speak against Jesse," she said flatly. "Jesse Jackson is our Israel. Even if he embarrasses us or says the wrong thing, he's the best we've got and I'm not going to bad mouth him — just like you're not going to bad mouth the Jewish State."

Her analogy made so much sense that I took it a step further in my own thinking. I've been saying that uncritical support of Israel threatens the integrity of Israeli democracy and the Jewish ethic. Following my friend's analogy I want to insist that Blacks' uncritical support of Black leaders who are insensitive to Jews or to outright anti-Semitism can be just as corrosive to black ethics. Cumulative insults from men like Louis Farrakhan, the Black Muslim extremist, plus polls showing rising Black anti-Semitism, plus Black criticism of Israel, have coalesced for some Jews into an irrational fear of Jesse Jackson, simply because he is the most prominent representative of Black sentiment.

I agree that at times Jackson has been insensitive to Jews, but I do not believe he has demonstrated disregard for Jewish interests. On the contrary, I think we have reason to take heart from many of his gestures of support: his appearance in the pulpit of the Skokie synagogue prior to the announced Nazi march, his public apology at the 1984 Democratic convention, his stirring remarks at a Holocaust memorial service, his interceding with Mikhail Gorbachev on behalf of Soviet Jews, and his participation in a Kristallnacht remembrance. Such actions have persuaded me that Jesse Jackson is capable of sensitization and change. I take his overtures toward Jews as a sign of his potential for empathy and self-education. Unless he shows signs of backsliding, I see no purpose in the continued attacks on him, especially as long as he remains a strong advocate for women.

Using the Jackson/Israel analogy of my Black friend on post-election day, I believe that Jews, who want the world to give Israel the benefit of the doubt despite her

errors and flaws, can work harder to understand the gigantic significance of this African-American leader, flaws and all, and should give him the benefit of the doubt as well.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF MEN



On the issue of Louis Farrakhan, the women in our small Black-Jewish group battled for months to change each other's minds. The argument sounded something like this:

Black Woman: "Since we have so few spokesmen who can engage the attention of the whole community, we have to protect our leaders, not censure them. I'm not going to attack any African-American just to make Jews feel better, especially someone like Farrakhan who has been such a positive influence on our youth. We're trying to develop living symbols of Black aspiration."

Jewish Woman: "But Farrakhan's hate message should *invalidate* his hero potential. Real leaders send the message to their followers that bigotry is unacceptable. Real leaders aren't afraid of denouncing injustice whoever its targets or perpetrators."

Black Woman: "Maybe Jews feel strong enough to go around undermining other Jews, but we have to worry about exacerbating the tensions that already divide the African-American community. If Jews really were there for us, you'd stop harping on Farrakhan. Only one percent of American Blacks are members of the Nation of Islam. There are millions of white anti-Semites. Isn't it hypocritical to keep throwing Farrakhan in our faces? Farrakhan's main message is one about economic independence, self-help and mutual support. What you do for your community is what Farrakhan wants Blacks to do for Blacks. But whenever he speaks about self-help, the press reports only what he says about Jews."

Jewish Woman: "Why not point that out to him? Maybe if he edits out the Jew-hating, the press will notice his economic program. No one's going to pay attention to the main 'message' as long as it's surrounded by malice. And how can you

be sure that his anti-Semitism is rhetorical? Maybe he consciously *uses* it to gain attention. Anyway, Jews have learned from experience that no expression of anti-Semitism is just rhetorical. Every pogrom starts with a hate campaign. Why not just admit it's wrong?"

Black woman: "Our position as middle-class, moderate Black leaders is too precarious for us to look weak."

And so it goes. Even in our intimate group where there is a *will* to understand, we spent five or six sessions on Louis Farrakhan and finally declared an impasse.

THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL



At about the same time that Harriet Michel and I started our small dialogue group, I helped to found a larger Black-Jewish women's group that was to prepare us for the Nairobi U.N. Conference; this group petered out within two years. At first, I attributed its failure to waning Black interest.

"Why do you think so many Black women stopped coming to meetings even though we started out with an equal representation? I asked a Black friend who had been part of the group.

"You Jews have to stop acting like God's chosen people," she barked, her eyes shooting sparks. "The world doesn't revolve around you. Relations with Jews are not a priority for most Black people; our main concern is *survival*."

Blacks worry about their actual conditions and fear for the present; Jews worry about their history and fear for the future.

My friend's point about Black priorities was well taken, but her words hurt; inter-group dialogue is the Jewish response to our deep-seated insecurity. We invest in dialogue as a form of insurance against anti-Semitism. Although safe and relatively prosperous right now, Jews are a people whose vulnerability is seared indelibly into our collective unconscious.

"A Jew needs dialogue the way anyone, even if never personally threatened, would need constant reassurance had one-third of her relatives been murdered," I tell my friend.

My friend listens but she still doesn't get it. She grew up in a neighborhood where Jews collected the rent, ran the shops, employed Black domestic workers, checked up on welfare clients, and taught Black children. She works now in New York City where every Jew she sees is thriving. She points out that 30 million American Blacks have only 24 Congressional representatives and no Black Senators, while six million American Jews have 31 Jewish members of the House and seven Jewish Senators.

Blacks worry that their (bad) situation will never improve — therefore their issues are affordable housing, better education, and affirmative action. Jews worry that our (good) situation will never last — therefore our issues are freedom of religion (separation of church and state), freedom of emigration (Soviet Jews, Ethiopian Jews) and a secure Israel. Blacks need relief in the form of practical economic assistance. Jews need relief in the form of continued acceptance.

Continued on page 28

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OUR FARM

I was born and grew up on a farm in a rural village named Czernica in eastern Poland. My father's family had been there for generations.

There were ten Jewish families in the village, The total population was about two hundred fifty families, Polish and Ukrainian. There was no synagogue or *cheder* (Hebrew school) in the village, and services were held in our house on the Sabbath and holidays. When we needed a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) or rabbi, we had to go to Podkamien, the nearby *shtetl* (town).

MEMORIES of MY LIFE

in a POLISH VILLAGE

1930-1949

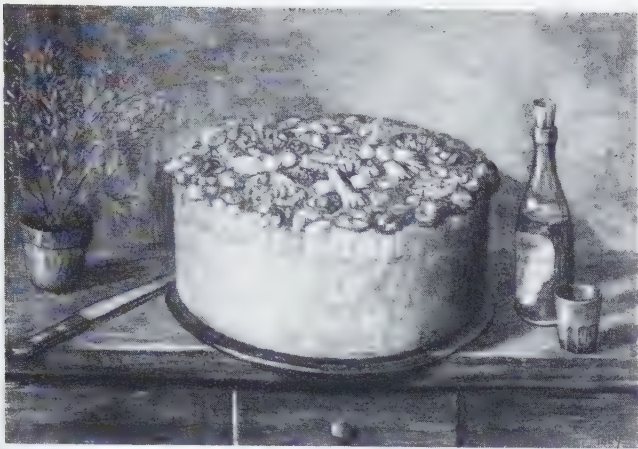
Paintings, Drawings, and Text by

TOBY KNOBEL FLUEK



MAKING POTATO LATKES

Our family enjoyed a potato *latke* (pancake) dinner, but Mother complained bitterly about making one. The *latkes* always disappeared before she could bring them to the table. When my brother and I were very young, we would grab the pancakes from the large clay bowl. Because oil was expensive, Mother made the pancakes on the iron sheet on top of the stove. To make them tastier, a few drops of oil and crushed garlic were added after they were cooked. Pancakes fried in oil were eaten only on Passover and Chanukah.



WEDDING CAKE

Mother baked the wedding cakes for the gentiles. This special cake consisted of white dough baked in a large dish 25 inches in diameter and about 13 inches high. The top was decorated with roses, birds, and leaves also made of bread dough. Black herbs were used for the eyes of the birds.

The large cake was necessary, because the peasants invited everybody from the village to their weddings. The parties were held in the barn for lack of space in the house. The cake was brought in on a large tray, and the four men holding it danced in a circle and then it was served to the guests.



GOING TO THE GHETTO

In the fall of 1942 the Nazis ordered my family along with the other Jews to leave our homes to go to the Brody Ghetto. All the Orthodox men were forced to shave off their beards. For my father this was a big humiliation. We packed all our belongings on two wagons that the local village officials had sent us. We mostly took food, such as flour, potatoes, and beans. We gave our house to our neighbor Katerina's son. We gave our neighbors the furniture, sewing machine, and some clothing, hoping to come back after the war to claim everything. Our aunt Tema and cousin Dusia went to hide in the woods. They warned us not to go to the ghetto because they'd heard that we probably would be killed. But no one really believed that.



LEAVING MY FAMILY

In March of 1943, there was a rumor in the ghetto that the liquidation was to start the following morning. The panic was indescribable. Men and women were distraught. Some were crying, others praying. The children were confused, not fully understanding the situation. People were thinking of ways to escape. My parents didn't want to try to run away from the ghetto because Father had built a hiding place in the building we lived in that he felt would be safe. My sister Surcie was very anxious to escape and asked me to go with her. My mother encouraged me to do so. It was very difficult leaving the rest of my family for the first time in my life.



WALKING THROUGH THE FIELDS

My sister and I walked for hours through fields on a cold miserable snowy winter night and became disoriented, losing the direction of our village. We followed a small light in the distance to a farm and slept there in the barn. The next day the farmer showed us the road to Czernica.

Then our ordeal truly began. We fought for our lives, living in fear every moment of the day and night, in cold, in rain, and at times with no food at all. This terror lasted me for a whole year.



BURNING HOSPITAL

At the liquidation of the Brody Ghetto all the Jews were taken to the Majdanek concentration camp. Some were lucky to escape to the woods, or they were hidden by farmers in the villages. Those caught hiding in the ghetto were shot on the spot. My father hid in the attic of the house where we lived and was caught right away by an SS man. The SS man shot my father right there. The people that were in the ghetto hospital had the most tragic deaths. The hospital was burned with all the people in it. The SS men shot any Jew who tried to run out of the burning building. My sister Lajcie was among those who perished.



EATING HOT SOUP

Hot soup was a treat. I got it only once every few months when I stayed with Karolczycha. She was truly a wonderful human being. She hid first my sister and then my mother and me for a week at a time. Others would only let us stay one night, although they always gave us a chunk of bread. There were two extremes among the peasants: those who believed in helping their neighbor in need, and those who were full of hatred and would kill you because you were a Jew.

There were very, very few people who helped. Thank God for those good souls.

Toby Knobel Fluek lives in New York City.

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WISHING FOR

"Father Knows Best"

A Short Story by Yona Zeldis McDonough

I had always dreamed of being a Christian. Christians, I decided at an early age, were much happier than Jews. I could prove it too: the evidence was everywhere. The Christians in my neighborhood were Italian and Catholic. There were lots of children in those families, at least four, and sometimes as many as seven. They lived in narrow limestone houses that seemed slightly too small for them: two or three sisters would have to share a room. I could imagine how they would stay up late, after they were supposed to be asleep, talking and giggling, reading comic books by flashlight under the covers.

Those houses had small lawns out front, with neat beds of flowers and holy icons placed in the grass: the Blessed Virgin with her arms outstretched, the infant Jesus holding a lamb. My family lived in a big apartment with lots of rooms — I had one of my own and so did my brother. My parents had their bedroom far down the hall, away from us, and my father had a study — for writing, he said. But I didn't see him write all that much; mostly, he sat on a second-hand couch that was near the window. When the couch was delivered, he said that it would be perfect for overnight guests. I liked that idea — overnight guests — but in fact, the only person who ever slept on that couch was my father, when he was tired in the afternoons, or sometimes at night too, if he and my mother had had a quarrel.

Those families filled their houses with vinyl covered E-Z chairs, color televisions, shag carpeting. My parents thought things like that were decadent and bourgeois. Our apartment had bare wooden floors that usually were too cold to sit on, lots of faded and dog-eared books everywhere, and odd, blotchy pictures on the walls that my parents called "abstract."

Those families had cars, and on weekends, went visiting to big, noisy cousins in Bensonhurst, in-laws in Canarsie. The kids would go into the backyard for a game of tag. Later, they would have a barbecue. My parents didn't seem to care for their families, and we never visited relatives, all of whom lived in the Midwest, anyway. And my father didn't own an automobile. "America is a country that worships the idol of the car," he told me, "and we won't bow." He always sounded quite grand when he said things like that, and his small, light eyes got a dreamy, faraway look. I squeezed his hand, though I wasn't sure exactly what he meant.

Another thing about Catholic families was their animals. Fat, soft bunnies in a backyard hutch, German shepherds that both excited and frightened me. I envied their toy poodles with painted toe nails, litters of kittens, bright raucous parakeets, shimmering fish. My father didn't believe in domesticated animals: Why did I want to thwart their natural instincts? he asked. But he finally gave in and let me buy a hamster at Woolworth's. It slept all day and left its food untouched until it was my bedtime, when I would hear it munching steadily in the dark. It spent the rest of the night running around and around on the stationary wheel in its cage, the soft squeak, squeak, lulling me to sleep. After two weeks, I found it dead, head caught between the spokes of the wheel, tiny neck snapped. "Suicide" was my brother's comment. Although my father offered to buy me another hamster, I declined.

But the family that was dearest to me was the Andersons, from "Father Knows Best." I loved all the characters: Dad, with his cardigan and pipe, Mom, whose arms were ever-outstretched



under a tray of fresh brownies. My mother hated to cook and never baked, not even from a mix. The meals she made were awful — burned or raw or mutilated: fish stew that curdled and appeared at the table with thick globs floating on it; gray pot roasts no one could chew; vegetables that had turned to mush. If we complained, she would cry, so we rarely did, and meals were generally eaten in an uneasy silence. The Andersons enjoyed wonderful meals together, at which everyone made wisecracks and laughed, and Mom reminded them gently to mind their manners.



*Mrs. Anderson
didn't cry or break
the dishes when she
wanted attention.*

Kitten, the youngest daughter, was in school plays, won spelling bees, belonged to the Girl Scouts. I didn't like school all that much, but I was dying to be a Girl Scout. I loved the hunter green uniform, plastic belt, green socks. But my father objected. The Girl Scouts were a paramilitary organization, he told me, and he was a pacifist. Didn't I want to be a pacifist like Daddy? he coaxed, stroking my hair. I wanted to please him, so I nodded, but I longed for those socks with the gold insignia at the ankle.

Bud, an adolescent of indeterminate age, was the brother. He was always getting into scrapes. I liked it when Dad and Bud patched things up — it always made me cry. My own brother was seven years my senior and scarcely noticed me. He collected things, but not model trains or baseball cards like Bud. Instead, he cherished a collection of bullets that spanned three centuries, a black widow spider encased in a glass ashtray, a miniature ivory skull, and a glass eye that was shot through with tiny red veins, thin as hairs. He owned literally thousands of ball bearings, in various sizes and materials, which he bought from an industrial supplier. His favorite was a large, stainless steel sphere that must have weighed ten pounds. He was very proud of it, and often took it into the bathroom, where he could polish it, slowly and lovingly, until it gleamed like a planet from a strange and distant galaxy. Once, while performing this ritual, it slipped and fell from his hands. We all heard the terrible noise and raced to the bathroom. We found my brother sloshing around in a pool of water; the ball bearing was nestled between the two shining white halves of the toilet bowl, which had been severed down the middle neatly as a melon.

The Andersons understood comfort and had plenty of pillows on their beds, pressed bathrobes, and in their bathrooms, there were always clean towels. In our apartment, you could never find: an ice cream scoop, a sponge, glue, stamps, a roll of scotch tape, a pad of paper, a pencil sharpener, or a band-aid.

Mr. Anderson didn't slip into deep, blue funks during which he sat on the couch, stroking its

frayed arm and saying nothing for hours at a time, even when you tried to cheer him up; Mrs. Anderson didn't cry or break the dishes when she wanted attention. In fact, the Andersons had very pretty dishes, from the Sears catalog, and they all matched. My mother collected dishes from thrift shops and junk stores and no two were ever the same. She was proud of them, the Blue Onion and Blue Willow, the Depression and Carnival glass, sponge and spatterware and the vivid, bright stuff she called Fiesta. Her dishes were a kind of passion and they overflowed the cabinets as well as dressers and sills. One afternoon, when my father was sitting in his study reading, my mother appeared in the doorway, holding the broken pieces of a cobalt-blue glass pitcher she had especially liked.

"Did you break this?" she asked. He said nothing and continued to read. "I know you did," she added, "and it was probably on purpose, too." He turned a page in his book, carefully moistening his forefinger with his tongue. "You've always hated my dishes," she said, her voice rising. My father didn't look up, but one hand started rubbing the arm of the sofa as he spoke.

"I think you're getting a little paranoid, don't you? I didn't break your pitcher. Considering how much junk you've got around here," he made a gesture with his arm that seemed to encompass not only the room, but the whole apartment, "I'm surprised more things aren't broken. Why don't you try cleaning up once in a while?"

"You really hate them, don't you?" she said, and she was shouting now. "Hate them, hate!" She raised her arm and hurled one of the larger pieces she was holding against the wall. It made a terrible noise as it hit, and broke immediately into a thousand bright bits. My father got up and quietly closed the door. I could hear him sweeping the pieces of broken glass into a pile with a newspaper or something, whoosh, whoosh on the wooden floor.

But sometimes, the dark clouds which seemed to hover over him would lift, and then he was the most wonderful, the most charming father in the world, even better than Mr. Anderson because he was real, and was *my* father, and Mr. Anderson was, after all, only make-believe. Those times, he hosted an imaginary radio program, for which I was both actress and audience. My stage name was *Little Mary Sunshine*, and I spoke into my hairbrush, which served as a microphone and I tried not to laugh — it would interrupt the programming — when he ad-libbed commercials for dolls that not only wet and cried but threw up their dinners, and a magical, multi-colored soap that you eat when you had finished washing with it.

The year that I was eleven, I stayed at home in the city instead of attending the progressive

Jewish camp in the Catskills where I had gone for the past three summers. My brother had recently gone off to college and didn't come home that summer, so my mother and I were alone. I knew that in Christian families, everyone went away together: camping by a lake or swimming at the shore. They breathed in the salt air, grew tan, toasted marshmallows, sang songs in the car. My mother had for years vacationed alone. Usually, she went to visit friends while my brother stayed at home with my father, who said he liked "New York's August hush," and I went to Ellenville, where I learned Israeli folk dances and was tormented by mosquitoes in the summer dusk. But that year, with my brother gone, my father went away by himself.

It was strange being home with everything so hot and silent. None of my friends were around and I spent a lot of time alone in my room, watching television and reading. I missed my father, but I didn't say that to my mother. She seemed preoccupied; she had stopped cooking altogether, and let me eat anything I wanted, which mostly turned out to be ice cream and cupcakes. Then, all at once she was packing, yanking the suitcases down from the closet, tossing our clothes in without even folding them.

She wanted to visit a friend, she told me; this time, I would come along. We sat in the air-conditioned Greyhound bus and I looked out the window, watching the way the white lines in the middle of the road seemed to curve and rush beneath the wheels. Soon, this made me feel sick so I concentrated instead on eating the lunch my mother had packed: sandwiches of peanut butter and jelly whose contents leaked through the soggy bread, hard boiled eggs with little bits of shell still clinging to the sides and stale cookies.

I liked the town where my mother's friend lived. It had small, one-story houses, surrounded by neat yards dotted with pieces of wicker lawn furniture. There were flower boxes on the window sills filled with pansies and petunias, and white trellises around which curved twisting stalks of beautiful red tomatoes. I liked my mother's friend too, a large blonde woman who loved to cook, even in the summer, and who served wonderful, odd tasting things to eat. Her husband was from Syria; for him she had learned to prepare meats fragrant with cinnamon, chickpeas ground with olive oil and lemon. She gave us wrinkled dark olives, a salty cheese that I loved, and a flat delicious bread that she heated in the oven before we ate it.

There were four children in this family, three sisters and a brother. And they were Jewish! I couldn't quite believe it, so I asked my mother again. The first night we were there, we all ate together, seated at their large dining room table. It was set with blue and white woven mats and in

the center were some pink flowers in a vase that one of the sisters had picked from the garden. Everyone talked a lot; the children teased their father and shared food easily from each other's plates.

After dinner, the father showed me the backyard. It was paved with bricks and bordered by low bushes that were studded with tiny, white flowers. He had planted everything himself. He explained to me how he had always loved trees and flowering shrubs, and how he had slowly constructed this oasis for his family. His arm gestured proudly over the dove cote, the ivy that covered the walls of the house. My father didn't like making things; he had to call the super to fix the faucets or bring the toaster to a repair shop. But he was wonderfully adept in his own way: the radio shows, the long stories that he composed, wrote down and then illustrated with magic markers. I had them all tacked to the walls in my room.

The blonde mother was in the kitchen with my mother. Over the crooning of the doves, I could hear them laughing as they prepared something for the next night's meal. I had never seen doves before, and I marvelled at their soft, plump bodies, their pink feet and eyes.

"Would you like to hold one?" said this unfamiliar, competent father. "They're very tame." I picked one up carefully and began to stroke its warm front. "She likes you," he said. "You see how quiet she is?" I petted the bird while he told me more about doves: when they mated, it was for life. I thought of my father then, and wondered where he was. What if he were with another family, one serene and whole, as ours never was? Or what if he were sitting alone in a strange room, staring out the window and stroking the arm of some other sofa in that wistful way that he had? I realized, quite suddenly, but with no surprise, that he wasn't coming home again.

Still clutching the dove, I went into the house through the kitchen door, to where my mother and her friend were standing at the counter, engrossed in their conversation. They hadn't heard me come in, so they didn't turn around. I could see that my mother had been coating cubes of meat with oil, and her hands and forearms were covered with it. When I went over to where she stood, she finally turned to face me. "He's not coming back," I said. She didn't pretend not to understand, and her glistening hands fell to her sides. I repeated what I had said, and then quite softly, she began to cry.

*My father didn't
like making things;
he had to call the
super to fix the
faucets or bring the
toaster to a repair
shop*



Yona Zeldis McDonough was born in Israel and grew up in New York City where she now lives. She recently completed a novel based on the life of Mary Magdalene.

BACK TO THE KITCHEN PART IV

by Charlotte Margolis Goodman

Recently a friend asked me what project I have been working on during my sabbatical. I admitted that although I have been doing research for several ongoing projects on women writers, the accomplishment that has given me the most satisfaction thus far this year is that I have finally learned how to make my mother's legendary fishcakes.

Like many other women, I have frequently felt ambivalent about cooking. Although I remember with gratitude the special Russian-Jewish foods prepared by my female relatives, many of whom emigrated from Europe to the United States, I am unwilling to spend a large part of each day in the kitchen. While it is undeniable that the person in charge of the cooking plays an essential role in every home, the labor involved in purchasing the ingredients, preparing the food, serving it, and cleaning up afterward is not appreciated sufficiently. Moreover, these time-consuming, repetitive tasks do not confer fame, fortune or power on the person in the household who performs them.

I came from a family that loved to eat, and many of the women who served as my earliest role models were excellent cooks. My father laughingly used to say that he married my mother because he fell in love with her mother's *colleten*, the Russian-style patties he remembered from his childhood. I can recall vividly my mother's celebrated fishcakes, noodle kugels and blintzes, my maternal grandmother's pickled herring with plump onions and carrot slices swimming in

brine, my paternal grandmother's incomparable knishes, my Aunt Rifka's flaky strudel, my Aunt Sally's cranberry mold, and the airy lemon meringue pies baked by the woman who used to help my mother whenever our large clan gathered in Brooklyn to celebrate holidays and birthdays.

Babushka, my father's mother, lived with us during my childhood. I have always regretted that I did not apprentice myself to her to learn the secrets of making flaky knishe dough. Several years after she died, I tried to recreate that flaky dough. What I produced was so miserable a failure that I never again could summon up the courage to repeat the experiment.

When I became a college student, I began to seek other women as role models, women more defined for me by their intellectual than their culinary accomplishments. In my college courses, cooking was never mentioned, and the rebellious literary characters with whom I most identified — Jane Austen's Emma, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver and Edith Wharton's Lily Bart — never were depicted donning aprons to prepare elegant concoctions for dinner.

The only time I ever cooked when I was a college student was during my sophomore year at Wellesley. Inspired perhaps by Wellesley's motto, "Not to be ministered unto but to minister," a friend and I volunteered to work at a settlement house in South Boston one evening each week. The task we were assigned was to super-

visé a supper club for neighborhood adolescent girls. Recently my mother sent me a letter I had written home that year. "Help!" I beseeched her. "Send me some simple recipes. The girls in our group know more about cooking than Judy and I do!"

I got married two days after my college graduation. By the time I had given birth to my first child, I was a competent though usually a rather uninspired cook. Busy with the seemingly endless routine of caring for one baby and pregnant again, I saw cooking as a necessary chore rather than a creative endeavor.

During the sixties, I returned to graduate school as a part-time student. Burdened with schoolwork as well as the demands of caring for two pre-school children, I still spent as little time in the kitchen as was feasible. After my husband had completed his medical training, we settled into the suburban community where we have lived for the last 25 years. I still perform my daily culinary chores rather perfunctorily. However, during the first few years that we lived here, we were frequently invited to elegant dinner parties, and I, in turn, felt obliged to expend enormous effort on cooking gourmet dinners when it was our turn to reciprocate.

My ambivalence about cooking persisted, even intensified, after I had finally completed my graduate training and had begun to teach English at a nearby college. Until my husband and our three children began to cook many of our meals, I would assemble several casseroles each Sunday in preparation for the busy week ahead. I longed for the day that I would no longer be responsible for feeding three adolescents as well as my husband and myself.

It soon became evident to me that even though some of my women colleagues share my ambivalence about cooking, many of them nevertheless are excellent cooks. At the thrice yearly pot-luck dinners that are sponsored by our Women's Studies Program, the food is outstanding.

However, a noteworthy feature of this communal meal is that those who do not wish to fix an elaborate dish are free to contribute wine or cheese and crackers instead.

Now that my three children are adults and no longer live at home, cooking for the most part is a less onerous chore than it once was. My husband cooks almost as many of our own meals as I do, and when we invite people to dinner from time to time, he helps me in the kitchen. Moreover, our dinner guests usually offer to contribute something to the meal.

Last year one of my sons joined me in Florida to visit my mother. After devouring her fishcakes, a dish she had perfected during the meatless days of World War II, he promptly asked her for the recipe. I was somewhat abashed to discover that this transaction had made me feel defensive. "Do you remember with nostalgia anything I used to cook for you when you were little?" I asked him, my voice quaking with anxiety. I blushed when he finally replied, "Crisped up salami and sliced cucumbers." This was his favorite lunch when he would return from nursery school in those blissful days before we all became obsessed with counting cholesterol and sodium.

After I returned from Florida, I resolved to set aside time so I could learn how to prepare some of the foods that I remember so fondly from my childhood. More secure about my own identity, I am eager to expand my cooking repertoire, for I have come to realize that these foods provide an important link between my generation and the generation of women who preceded me. In the future, if my own grandchild should happen to ask me for the recipe after sampling my fishcakes, I shall be happy to oblige.

Charlotte Margolis Goodman, a professor of English at Skidmore College, is the author of Jean Stafford: The Savage Heart (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), as well as articles on American writers.

CHARLOTTE MARGOLIS GOODMAN'S CRISPED UP SALAMI

Slice off several pieces of Hebrew National Kosher Salami. Place under the broiler and broil until crisp.

MARGARET MARGOLIS' FABULOUS FISHCAKES

- Saute one large diced onion in small amount of vegetable oil until well-cooked.
- Add three diced potatoes, three diced carrots and one-half cup of water, plus salt and pepper to taste.
- When vegetables are soft, add one and three-quarters pounds of haddock or scrod, and cook for another fifteen minutes or so.
- Put mixture in chopping bowl or food processor, add three eggs and enough matzah meal so mixture holds its shape, and mix together.
- Make small cakes. Then heat oil in frying pan and slowly put in the fishcakes, allowing them to brown before turning them over.
- When they are nicely browned, put them on a paper towel to absorb any excess grease before you transfer them to a pan. They can be heated through in the oven before serving, and they can also be frozen and reheated. This recipe makes eighteen fishcakes.



Courtesy Hebrew National Foods

LILITH REVIEWS

THEN SHE FOUND ME

by Elinor Lipman

New York: Pocket Books, 1990

307 pp., \$18.95



When should we laugh at ourselves? And when does that laughter cross the line into harmful stereotypes? This is a question that Jewish women often ask themselves because of the prevalence of “JAP” and “Jewish mother” jokes.

Since humor can often make it easier for people to understand complex opinions and positions, there certainly is a place for its positive use, even when it borders on the stereotypic. And that’s exactly how Elinor Lipman uses it in this first, well-crafted novel, *Then She Found Me*. Tackling many difficult contemporary issues — adoption, the Holocaust, intermarriage and the search for birth parents and children — Lipman presents the tale of Bernice Graverman and April Epner.

Bernice, a popular Boston talk show host, searches for and finds the daughter she gave up for adoption at birth. April, the daughter, is a high school Latin teacher who has been raised in Providence, Rhode Island by Holocaust survivors. Bernice is crass and aggressive and weaves some

pretty tall tales about April’s conception and birth. April, plain, Harvard-educated and not particularly interested in any “new” family history, tries to dodge Bernice’s advances while attempting to come to terms with her mid-thirties single life.

In between, surprisingly hilarious episodes quickly follow one another until the relationship between birth mother and daughter reaches a fairly predictable denouement. Yet there is plenty of tension along the way, and a lot of ground gets covered in the category of understanding your neighbors and their lifestyles too. Many of the characters are stereotypes, but Lipman uses this technique as a shorthand to get her message across. Since her points about mutual understanding are very important ones, we can forgive her the stereotyping.

— PG

HOW I BECAME HETTIE JONES

by Hettie Jones

New York: E.P. Dutton, 1990

239 pp., \$18.95

How did Hettie Cohen, nice-Jewish-girl from the Laurelton section of Queens, NY, end up at the center of late fifties’ and early sixties’ “Beat” literature, jazz innovation and interracial taboos?

“As an outsider Jew I could have tried for white, aspired to the liberal, intellectual, potentially conservative western tradition,” she writes. “But I was never drawn to that history.”

Instead, after finishing college and pursuing a graduate degree at Columbia, she found Manhattan’s Greenwich Village. There, a burst of new music filled the air. And poetry: Gregory Corso, Diane Di Prima, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allan Ginsburg made her head swirl and her soul expand. Not surprisingly, this emotional euphoria found Hettie open to relationships, and men responded. One,

LeRoi Jones, became her husband — Black to her White, a Christian and a Jew, of differing economic backgrounds (he middle class, she working class) — drawn together by a love of the arts and the frenzy that accompanies creativity and defiance.

But that was before politics came to dominate their lives, before civil rights, before Black power, before feminism. Like a Beat version of the feminine mystique, Hettie stopped writing poetry, for soon there were two baby girls to feed, clothe and tend. Her days were spent editing and proofreading at the *Partisan Review* while LeRoi wrote, lectured and held court. Early on, Hettie justified his womanizing: “Part of his charm is the way he treats them. He’s kind, polite, good-humored, gentle. So they just can’t help it, and neither can he, and they’re all over him like ants in honey.”

Eventually this line of reasoning wore thin. Unable to work out an acceptable arrangement, the pair split, reunited, then split again for the final time in 1964. But theirs was more than personal troubles run amok. Although the Beats prided themselves on defying cultural mores while remaining apolitical, by the early 1960s the civil rights movement was causing even the most aloof to question color codes and restrictions.

Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Birmingham, Alabama’s Bull Connor had a visceral impact on LeRoi. No longer simply a well-respected writer, poet and critic, he now donned the cap of activist — militant even. Soon he was Imanu Amiri Baraka, and he found it increasingly difficult, and eventually impossible, to have a white mate.

Hurt, but not surprised, Hettie had to come to terms with a new phase in her married life. “In the seven years I’d been with Roi,” she writes, “I’d watched the loosening of what would one day be called ‘Black rage.’ I knew it would turn on me but that was part of the risk.”

both viewed as experts of the clinical experience, and their voices are given equal weight.

The techniques are drawn primarily from experiential therapy, a nice counterbalance to other books' important feminist work on other kinds of therapy (mostly object relations and family systems therapy). Techniques include hypnosis, touch therapy, storytelling and phototherapy. The major content of interest is sexual abuse, but there is also a focus on other clinical issues such as adult children of alcoholics, compulsive eating and working with the "inner child."

This volume is written in straightforward, accessible language. Initially, I wished for more in-depth analysis. But as I read chapter after chapter, I realized that I was learning from the very structure of the book. Immersing myself in the stories of women therapists and clients who spoke about so many different issues in personal terms, I felt as if I was invited to move from my head to more experiential and metaphorical ways of working.

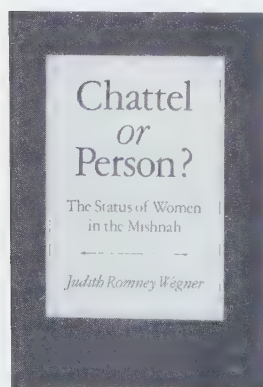
— Michele Bograd

CHATTEL OR PERSON?: THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE MISHNAH

by Judith Romney Wegner

New York: Oxford University Press, 1988

267 pp., \$26



I approached this book with trepidation. Recent scholarly writings on women and Judaism, framing their question as "Is traditional Judaism sexist?" have suffered because the authors' biases get in the way of the analysis of the text. Happily, Wegner, who is a lawyer and scholar of ancient cultures, does not have this problem. Her book, a dispassionate, academic, readable study of women's legal status in

the Mishnah (a compendium of legal teachings completed in Palestine in the third century CE) allows us to draw our own conclusions about the possibility of a more egalitarian Judaism.

It would be completely reasonable to assume, given history as we know it, that in a patriarchal society two millennia ago women were treated as chattel (that is, entities possessing no rights or responsibilities). It is surprising, then, to see in how many ways the rabbis recognized women as persons. For example, adult women in Mishnaic society could own property, make binding vows, be considered responsible for their actions and be taken to court — all indices of personhood and independent agency.

Needless to say, these examples are counterbalanced by numerous instances in which women were chattel. Fathers can sell their minor daughters into servitude until the age of puberty (this is not the case with sons); marriage and divorce can be initiated only by men; and husbands can subject their wives to a humiliating ordeal if they suspect adultery.

What is the principle that explains when women are persons and when chattel? In examining the inconsistencies, Wegner posits that women's legal status changes when it comes to sex. Minor daughters, wives and women awaiting levirate marriage (that is, women described in terms of their sexual, or potentially sexual, relationships with men) are chattel — the property of their fathers, husbands and brothers-in-law respectively. Any infringement on these women's sexuality (rape, for example) is an infringement not on the woman's personhood, but on a particular man's property. To put it differently, these women are not men's property when it comes to arms, legs or noses, but when it comes to sexual body parts they suddenly become men's property. In these instances the rabbis forget that women are people, too.

It follows that daughters over the age of twelve, divorcees and widows (that is, women who are not "owned" through sexual relationship to a particular man) are persons in all respects.

Wegner claims that certain restrictions on women (like those having to do with communal activities of the Temple and the

synagogue) reflect what the rabbis felt in response to women's sexuality: fear. The Mishnah records all sorts of precautions against men and women intermingling too freely, even if the occasion was a religious festival. Through their rulings, the rabbis indicate that they suspect women are more frivolous and less inclined to sexual morality than are men. The rabbis' stress on menstruation as a source of serious cultic impurity is a further aid in restricting women. It becomes clear that without the safeguards that the rabbis enact, men would be endangered by women's potent sexuality.

Because of the dispassion and fastidiousness of this book, it came as a surprise to me that Wegner has written something very provocative, far more provocative, perhaps, than she intended. She counts herself among those women who believe Judaism and feminism can be reconciled by changing Jewish law, but if Wegner's thesis is correct, women cannot achieve equality in Judaism by legal changes alone. The status of women in Judaism is determined not only by the laws that apply to them, but by the way women are perceived by men, and furthermore by the way women perceive themselves.

The laws in the Mishnah concerning women do not exist in a vacuum. Admitting women to rabbinical school, for example, will not transform Judaism unless we acknowledge that the insights into Judaism these women possess are as valid as those of their male counterparts. The creation of a Judaism that reflects the concerns and contributions of all Jews is possible only when all Jews are perceived as persons, when differences between men and women are no longer used as justification for the exclusion of either from any aspect of Jewish life. Wegner's book is disturbing because it forces me to confront some unpleasant facts. The Mishnah's authors are not unique in their fear of women — it is *still* the case that religious equality for women threatens the male ego.

Judith Romney Wegner's book is more than a scholarly analysis of a Jewish legal text. It challenges Jewish feminists to reconsider their goals and the efforts needed to achieve them.

— Dvora E. Weisberg

ALWAYS A SISTER: THE FEMINISM OF LILLIAN D. WALD

*A biography by Doris Groshen Daniels
New York: The Feminist Press, 1990
224 pp., \$24.95*

Why do we know so little about this larger-than-life, extraordinary figure? Lillian Wald was the founder of the Henry Street Settlement House and the Visiting Nurses Association, and a notable activist in the labor movement, the woman's suffrage movement and the peace movement (during World War I). She was one of the pre-eminent social reformers of the Progressive era.

Is she unknown because of a kind of latent anti-Semitism? (After all, Jane Addams, that other venerable settlement house founder, is very well known, as is Hull House in Chicago, that stern Quaker hotbed of idealism.)

Is she unknown because of a bias against nursing? Wald's roots and major identity were in nursing, a field much undervalued and maligned. (Wald created the profession of public health nurse.)

Daughter of well-to-do immigrant parents, Wald grew up in the German-Jewish community of Rochester, New York. Although as an adult she became involved in Ethical Culture, she always identified as a Jew, and she used her German-Jewish connections brilliantly to raise money in the Jewish banking community of New York.

Wald was very much at home with the rich and the powerful (and she appreciated fine clothing and cultivated good looks), but she lived almost her entire adult life in a settlement house in a poor neighborhood, and even brought her mother to live there with her after she was widowed. The nurses at the house were a tight, compatible group, and Wald seems to have had close, loving relationships with them.

Nursing, during those years, was an exciting part of the women's movement. Wald was at the center of a progressive community that was run by strong, remarkable females who concentrated on the special health needs of women. This book reminds us of her many accomplishments.

— Mary Cahn Schwartz

Editor's note: An excellent new source-book, Lillian D. Wald, Progressive Activist, edited by Clare Coss (New York: The

Feminist Press, 1989), includes Wald's speeches, correspondence and a one-woman play based on her life.

THE AMENDMENT

*by Sue Robinson
New York: Birch Lane Press, 1990
237 pp., \$17.95*



The year is 1998, and the Human Life Amendment has been ratified, making abortion illegal throughout the United States and calling for rigid enforcement of the legislation. Its passage was accomplished largely by the emotional and persistent efforts of the Rights for the Unborn League, led by the charismatic first lady, Mary Holt Morgan.

While a ratification celebration is taking place in the New Orleans Superdome, across the Mississippi River abortions are being performed in a makeshift clinic by idealist Michael Green, M.D., and his faithful assistant, Nora O'Brien, R.N. The police botch up a raid, and patient and doctor lose their lives. Is it murder?

Frances Foster, mother of the deceased patient (her lovely only child) is filled with anger and determination. She must avenge her daughter's death. She gathers together a dedicated group whose goal is to raise money to guarantee women passage and safe abortions outside of the country. Among them are: Nora O'Brien, the registered nurse who survived the police raid and was bailed out of jail by Frances; Elizabeth McKinley, grieving best friend of Frances' daughter; Adele Pearson, dean of Crofton School, the alma mater of both Frances Foster and First Lady Mary Holt Morgan; and Mary Todd and Helene Dupre, aged friends of Frances who welcome the opportunity to join in the cause.

They plot to raise \$100 million by kidnapping the first lady. Their planning is detailed and daring and a mere step ahead of Jack Riley, special agent of the Rights for the Unborn League. Can meticulous organization and propelling motivation be enough for this inexperienced gang? Can they pull it off?

Somewhat propagandistic, somewhat a suspense drama, somewhat fey, this novel by Sue Robinson has both bite and good humor.

— Ruth Schnur

Eleanor Bader writes frequently for New Directions for Women. Michele Bograd is a psychologist in private practice in Cambridge, MA. Ruth Schnur is an avid reader who lives in Princeton, NJ. Mary Cahn Schwartz is a social worker in private practice in Washington, DC. Dvora E. Weisberg is a doctoral candidate in Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

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Still, this is not to say that there were no options for an intellectually brilliant, spiritually ambitious woman within Judaism of Stein's time, even less to imply that there are no such options today.

What does Edith Stein's story leave me feeling, as a Jewish woman, a rabbi and a scholar of Jewish-Christian relations? On the one hand, here is someone who courageously follows what she takes to be her vocation from God, and who (even allowing for hagiography) clearly brings godliness into this world. A co-prisoner at Auschwitz wrote, "It was her complete calm and self-possession that marked Stein out. She went among the women like an angel, comforting, helping and consoling them," and a novice at Stein's convent remarked that, "At Mass, she seemed to participate as if she were offering herself on the altar." Before such testimonies, I can only be humble.

On the other hand, I am angry when a Jew chooses not to continue to struggle with the civilization into which she was born, however difficult she may find it. I don't understand why Stein didn't wrestle longer and harder with this complicated blessing of Jewishness. And I feel sad and cheated that her profound work as a translator, philosopher, inspirational writer and spiritual director enhanced another tradition and not mine. Judaism needs every great spirit we have to help us in the task of religious renewal. Stories such as Stein's make me feel more committed than ever to ensuring that Jews, particularly women, not be hindered in experiencing the riches of our faith.

Though Stein can never be a role model for me as a Jewish woman, she is still someone from whom I can learn. Her writings about women's roles (suggesting that as we move into the public sphere we stay conscious of our uniquely feminine capabilities) prefigure the most current feminist thought. I am fascinated by Stein's very intense and extensive prayer life; I am intrigued by her career as a spiritual counselor. I would like to know more about that role, and about the way in which we can incorporate some of its functions into contemporary Judaism.

Stein can, after all, in certain ways, be a teacher to us. Though she found her bread elsewhere, we can use some of her leaven in our own Jewish lives.

Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer is a Reconstructionist rabbi with a PhD in Jewish-Christian relations.

Assistance. Acceptance. Clearly, these needs are not comparable, but they can be experienced with comparable intensity and they can lead people to the same place. Thus Blacks enter into dialogue in the hope it will result in action to address their needs, while for Jews, dialogue *is* the need; if Blacks are still talking to us, we think, maybe the liberal alliance is not dead, maybe we don't have to fear Black Christians as much as white Christians, maybe everyone will promise not to hurt us.

While I had been hurt by my friend's angry words, talking together clarified that I was the one who had not understood. I had suggested there was something wrong with Blacks for dropping out of the dialogue when in fact there was something wrong with the dialogue for failing to serve the needs of its Black participants. Because the Jewish agenda — creating alliances — was being fulfilled, Jews kept showing up at the meetings. But the Black agenda — cooperative activism — had stalled, so some Black women had stopped coming.

ISRAEL, AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND SOUTH AFRICA

I have been trying to persuade Black friends that Zionism — the commitment to keep Israel alive as a Jewish state with a Law of Return that gives Jews automatic citizenship — is not racism any more than goals and timetables for Black hiring is reverse racism. I believe that anyone who can understand why history entitles minorities and women to affirmative action ought to understand why history entitles Jews to safe space and preferential immigration policies. Just as legal remedies are justified in reparation for racism and sexism, the Law of Return is justified by worldwide persecution and anti-Semitic bigotry.

Why ask my Black friends should Israel's relatively well-off four-and-a-half million people get three billion dollars in aid (much of it military) when all of Black Africa, with its half billion poor people, gets less than one billion dollars? Given the U.S. budget crisis, they say, some of the money earmarked for Israel might be redirected to developing African nations, Black Caribbean islands and the Third World within our own borders: Harlem,

the South Bronx, Detroit, Watts, and the South Side of Chicago.

Despite growing antagonism between Blacks and Jews, I draw hope from surveys that show our two communities still are the most politically compatible groups in America. Our voting patterns are more alike than any other racial or religious categories. We share a common vision of justice. The Congressional Black Caucus and the Jewish members of Congress vote together on most issues including those affecting Israel, Soviet Jews and South Africa. In our electoral habits, we are similarly perverse. Although Jews have experienced great economic success, we still vote our consciences not our pocket-books. Although Blacks have experienced great economic stress, they still vote their consciences not their rage. It's up to us to build on this compatibility, bring it out of the statistics books and make it work for us.

Where Black-Jewish relations are concerned, I find my women's movement experience instructive. In the early years of feminism's Second Wave, millions of disparate women accentuated female commonalities in order to create a unified women's movement. This period was analogous to the time when Blacks and Jews accentuated their common dream of justice in order to create a unified civil rights movement.

Now, however, feminists are acknowledging that each woman comes from a different place and has different needs, and likewise, instead of saying Blacks and Jews are the same under the skin, most of us are trying to respond to each group's special needs while keeping alive that common dream of justice.

My first reaction was to regret that identity politics — the ideology of distinctiveness — have replaced the politics of commonality. But taking the lead from women of color, I have seen the virtue of group cohesion, self-affirmation, and unashamed advocacy of their special interests. Today Blacks and Jews and other Outsiders insist on being let "In" (wherever that is) without having to pay the price of conformity.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin is a founding editor of Ms. magazine. This material will appear in somewhat different form in her forthcoming book Deborah, Golda and Me: Being Jewish and Female in America to be published by Crown Publishers in 1991.

REACTING TO RAPE IN THE IVY LEAGUE

by Rachel Kadish

I have always been a feminist — I did not become one at Princeton University. But during my three and one-half years at this seemingly enlightened school, I learned, for the first time, to fight. It has actually been easier to be a Jew here at Princeton than to be a woman, and this has surprised me.

My first year here, I spent a lot of time explaining Jewish customs to people — to hall mates who offered me pizza during Yom Kippur, and to my Texan roommate who wanted to know just when the U.S. had given Israel its freedom anyway? Ignorance about Judaism, however, rarely presented itself as prejudice; but ignorance about women often did. The word “feminist” was routinely defined by male students (and by plenty of females, too) as “lesbian bitch,” and I remember one time being furious when a so-called friend asked me to leave his dorm room so that he could tell some ‘well-meaning’ misogynist jokes. Over the first year, I built up a terrible feeling of isolation.

Of course, there were places I could have gone to for support, like Hillel or the Women’s Center. But as a first-year student, I was still too insecure to identify so unequivocally with alternative campus culture. It wasn’t until my sophomore year that a couple of anti-female incidents catalyzed me into more self-confident identification.

Tired of Being Bossed Around by Ugly Lesbian Bitches?

Men Unite: Fuck Feminists ... Put Women Back on Their Knees Where They Belong.

These hand-printed posters appeared all around my dorm, and suddenly I — who had never considered myself a political person in the least — was on the warpath. Around the same time, a campus group of marchers (“Take Back the Night” advocates protesting such issues as child abuse, harassment of homosexuals, and rape)



Princeton student sings at SHARE rally

were shouted at, mooned, and heckled with, “You can’t have the night, it belongs to Michelob.”

Before the end of that year, I had written a feminist letter to the campus newspaper, declared my minor to be women’s studies, and found myself a small community of women who shared my feminist views (including some women active in the Orthodox-dominated Jewish community). I also participated in the next “Take Back the Night” march. Hundreds of us, women and men, gathered and walked around campus, stopping at designated points where rape survivors got up and spoke, often for the first time in their lives, about their experiences. For me, the march was overpowering. I stood in the crowd and saw face after familiar face moving towards the microphone, and I was overwhelmed by a feeling of *Oh no, not her. Please let it not be another one, not someone I care about.*

After the march, a flyer posted in my dorm read, “Take Back the Night, Part II: The Revenge.” What, I wondered, exactly is the revenge for those of us who speak out about rape? How differently most people would have reacted to the flyer if it had read, “Affirmative Action: The Revenge.”

In my third year at Princeton, I got very involved in a group called SHARE (Sexual Harassment and Assault Resources and Education program). SHARE, with one full-time counsellor and one part-time one, is considered by other universities to be a model program, even though it is woefully inadequate.

SHARE’s mission, in a nutshell, is not only to counsel and offer legal advice to those who have been raped or sexually harassed, but also to run a serious program of consciousness-raising for first-year students during orientation week. More generally, it works to educate and enlighten an often benighted academic community.

Because SHARE’s counselors couldn’t begin to adequately meet the needs of our community, several students organized to request a second full-time position. (One student even found a good deal of funding for it.) Our request was denied by the administration. A group of students then carried out a sit-in at the office of the university president, passing out petitions (we got over 4,000 signatures), wearing armbands, and camping out on the green outside Nassau Hall, singing and waving placards. I have never seen a more caring and united group of Princeton students. It was profoundly moving.

As the days went on, support grew. Armbands were worn everywhere; people slept out on the green every night; and encouragement came from unexpected places. I was heartened and surprised that some support even came from people in the Orthodox Jewish community on campus (after all, Jewish women don’t get raped, do they?). In this Orthodox community — where premarital sexual contact is ‘prohibited’ — each incoming religious Princeton student still receives, like each of us here, a cosmetics kit containing two condoms.

Well, the semester ended and with it our hopes. Not only did we fail in our attempt to expand the SHARE offices, but the administration (waiting until summer vacation when we troublemakers were gone) actually ‘let go’ the two counsellors who worked at SHARE. We felt devastated.

At this point, my final semester at Princeton is just around the corner. We have plans for another “Take Back the Night” march, and a new interim director for SHARE has been hired. Still, it’s been difficult to re-involve myself in activism this year. I spent a good deal of the Fall just forcing myself to feel hope. If there’s this much resistance to gender equality among the ivy, *where* is it any easier?

Dominique Cellen/Daily Princetonian

TSENA RENA

Where to go for what if you're Jewish and female

FOR YOUR VIEWING — AND LISTENING — PLEASURE...

PARTISANS OF VILNA: THE SONGS OF WORLD WAR II JEWISH RESISTANCE is a new recording of Yiddish songs sung by young Vilna Ghetto resisters. Available as a CD, LP or cassette. *Flying Fish/1304 W. Schubert/Chicago, IL 60614.*

Highlighting the spiritual, physical and cultural beauty of **JERUSALEM** are "Jerusalem: Soul of a People," "Sites Unseen: Off the Beaten Track in Jerusalem," and "Music in Jerusalem," three films on VCR available from *Ergo Media Inc./PO Box 2037/668 Front St./Teaneck, NJ 07666.*

A new weekly cable television program **THE JNF JEWISH ENTERTAINMENT SHOW** will air Sundays at 1 pm in 155 cities in the US on the National Jewish Television. Check local listings for channel.

A 35-page guide with detailed information on 80 available media productions on the subject of **WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM AND HEALTH** is \$11.50 for institutions and \$6.50 for individuals and community-based organizations from *Alternative Media Information Center/121 Fulton St., fifth fl./New York, NY 10038.*

Step-by-step demonstrations for making strudel, kishka, cholent and other of **BUBBE'S SECRET RECIPES**, as well as **ISRAELI COOKING MADE EASY AND DELICIOUS**, are available from *Cooking Videos, Inc./PO Box 6146/Delray Beach, FL 33484.*

"Chanukah," "Sing Around the Seasons," and "Journey to Secret Places" are three newly released programs in the **SHALOM SESAME** series, co-produced by the Children's Television Workshop

and Israel Educational Television. Order from *Shalom Sesame/1-800-822-1105.*

A 19-chapter TV series **PILLARS OF FIRE** telling the dramatic story of Zionism from the first Zionist Congress to the establishment of the State of Israel, is now available on videocassettes from *World Zionist Organization/Department of Information/6505 Wilshire Blvd. #505/Los Angeles, CA 90048.*

A LITTLE LIGHT READING...

JEWISH WOMEN NOW is a reprint of columns by women writers which first appeared in *Jewish Currents*. Among those writing are Haika Grossman, Carol Jochnowitz and Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz. Available for \$1 plus \$.75 postage, and at bulk rates from *Jewish Currents/22 E. 17th St. #601/New York, NY 10003.*

Judaica News, a new quarterly newsletter for **JUDAICA COLLECTORS**, artisans and those interested in Jewish art, lists events in the New York metropolitan area. \$20 for one year, or a free sample copy: *Judaica News/PO Box 1130/Fair Lawn, NJ 07410.*

A series of pamphlets on the **JEWISH LIFE CYCLE**, "Birth," "Bar Mitzvah/Confirmation," "Marriage," and "Death and Mourning," combines Conservative, Orthodox and Reform learning. Available in quantity at 20 cents each from *JWB Jewish Chaplains Council/15 E. 26th St./New York, NY 10010.*

Brush up your Hebrew with *Hadoar*, the oldest **HEBREW LANGUAGE WEEKLY** in the world, written for the reader fluent in Hebrew and covering current events, literature and art. *Lamishpaha* is an illustrated monthly in simpler Hebrew, geared to the young reader and the adult not yet

fluent. Both are published by *Histadruth Ivrit of America/1841 Broadway/New York, NY 10023.*

The SAT Gender Gap: Identifying the Causes, (\$15); *Earnings Sharing in Social Security: A Model for Reform*, (\$15); *Legal Help for Battered Women* (\$5); and *The Guide to Resources on Women and AIDS*, (\$20) are recent publications of **THE CENTER FOR WOMEN POLICY STUDIES**. Associate memberships are \$50. *CWPS/2000 P St. NW #508/Washington, DC 20036.*

GIVING IT AWAY...

Funds are needed to make possible the completion of a book by Batya Weinbaum, **WOMEN IN ISRAEL SPEAK: RELIGION, ACTION AND POLITICS**. The book consists of photographs, interviews and poetry of the women of Israel. Send checks payable to the New Israel Fund, designated for "Israel Speak Project, Isha L'Isha." *New Israel Fund/111 W. 40th St. #2600/New York, NY 10018.*



Thousands of copies of **THE ALPHABET OF JEWISH COOKING**, a Russian-language, hardcover, illustrated cookbook, will be distributed in the Soviet Union as part of a project to provide basic Jewish libraries for Russian Jewish homes. This is one of many educational and social assistance projects of *Shvut Ami, International Center for Soviet Jews/10 Belilius St., PO Box 6141/Jerusalem, Israel*, supported by *The*

American Friends of Shvut Ami, 1025 Fifth Ave. #3ES/New York, NY 10028.

Sponsors can **ADOPT A STUDENT** by providing modest monthly grants to recent Ethiopian immigrants studying at universities in Israel. Contact *North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry/165 E. 56th St./New York, NY 10022.*

The Foundation for Research on Sexually Transmitted Disease (**FROST'D**) is raising funds to establish a drop-in center and **RESIDENCE FOR HOMELESS WOMEN** and prostitutes, many of whom are HIV infected, on the Lower East Side in New York City. Send tax-deductible contributions to *FROST'D/266 W. 12th St./New York, NY 10014.*

EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

RENEWING SHALOM: MOVING FROM THE COLD WAR TO ONE EARTH is a conference to be held Jan. 6-7 at Columbia University in New York City. Four topics will be discussed: ending the Cold War and nuclear arms race, creating a peace dividend, healing the global environment and reshaping relationships between Jewish communities. *The Shalom Center/7318 Germantown Ave./Philadelphia, PA 19119.*

FIRST WORLD JEWISH SINGLES HAPPENING is taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Feb. 15-22. Contact *Isram Tours/630 Third Ave./New York, NY 10017.*

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Planning a trip to the Soviet Union? **CARRY YIDDISH BOOKS** in your luggage to deliver personally to Soviet Jews. Contact *The National Yiddish Book Center/Old East Street School/Amherst, MA 01002.*

A kit that describes eleven model synagogue programs that **REACH OUT TO NEWLY ARRIVED SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRES**, includes a pamphlet "101 Tips on Assisting Soviet Jews in Your Community." \$10 per kit, from *UAHC/838 Fifth Ave./New York, NY 10021/attn.: Randi Locke*.

SEE YOURSELF IN PRINT

LILITH LIVETH! For a special women's literary event in Spring 1991, submit poems or short prose pieces about Lilith. Contact *Henny Wenkart/Jewish Women's Poetry Workshop/National Council of Jewish Women/New York Section/9 E. 69th St./New York, NY 10021*.

"The Jewish Community Towards the Year 2000" is the theme of the fourth annual **PHOTO AND VIDEO CONTEST**, sponsored by the Association of Friends of the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Israel, and open this year to professionals as well as amateurs. Prizes include a trip to Israel. Submissions are due from overseas entrants by March 30, and April 30 for Israeli entrants. Send for guidelines to *Beth Hatefutsoth Photo and Video Contest/PO Box 39359/Tel Aviv, Israel*.

For an international collection of first-person writings by **BATTERED WOMEN AND SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** (women in prison of special interest), send photocopied journals or diaries up to 25 pages, letters, essays, even fragmentary accounts. Anonymity respected if requested. Send SASE. *Miriam K. Harris, editor/PO Box 670-665/Dallas, TX 75367*.

For a chapbook, please send poems about **BIBLICAL OR MODERN JEWISH PERSONALITIES** — especially women such as the Daughters of Zelophehad and Golda Meir — to *Judi-isms/27 W. Penn St./Long Beach, NY 11561*.

For an anthology by and about **WOMEN WHO HAVE LEFT THEIR (NON-INFANT) CHILDREN** focusing on themes such as motivating

forces/pressures, emotions experienced in the wake of such a "choice," and/or reactions of people when custody is discovered or revealed, send inquiries or manuscripts of less than 20 pages to *Diane S. Lebeuf/PO Box 9203/Mills College/Oakland, CA 94613*.

For a special Summer 1991 issue of *Passager: A Journal of Remembrance and Discovery on LETTER-WRITING* send copies of letters written between 1690 and 1990. *Passager* publishes personal voices that speak of the challenge and wonder of the passage of time, focusing on old-age. Send submission with SASE to *Passager, RB/University of Baltimore/1420 N. Charles St./Baltimore, MD 21201*.

BROOMSTICK, the national magazine by, for and about women over 40, invites all women over 40 to participate in their writing contest. Postmark deadline, March 30. For entry form and details send SASE to: *Broomstick/Box 251 RD#1/Uniondale, PA 18470*.

NEW RESOURCES FOR BODY AND SOUL

The National Women's Studies Association **AWARD IN JEWISH WOMEN'S STUDIES** will be given in 1991 to a graduate student who is enrolled for the fall semester and whose area of research is Jewish women's studies. Applications must be postmarked no later than February 15, and are available from *NWSA/University of Maryland/College Park, MD 20842*.

A suggested text for a **LIVING WILL**, that requires consultation with a rabbi competent in medical ethics is available for \$3 to cover postage and handling from *The Union for Traditional Judaism/261 E. Lincoln Ave./Mount Vernon, NY 10552*.

Interested in **STARTING A YIDDISH CLUB?** Correspond, exchange ideas with *Henry Sher/343 Hampshire Dr./Ventnor, NJ 08406*.

To obtain a grant to fund **CREATIVE JEWISH PROGRAMMING ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES** — especially programs to promote understanding of the positive aspects of Israel — contact the *North American Jewish Students Appeal/165 Pidgeon Hill Rd./Huntington Station, NY 11746*.

A booklet offering guidance to congregations **PLANNING SERVICES OR EVENTS TO INCLUDE BOTH DEAF AND HEARING PARTICIPANTS** and a regularly updated directory of Conservative congregations which have some accessibility for the disabled are available from *Department of Public Affairs, United Synagogue/155 Fifth Ave./New York, NY 10010*. Also available is a video "Someone is Listening" about the experience of a deaf teenager who discovers his Jewish roots and ultimately prepares for his *bar mitzvah*.

Eligible senior citizens can receive **FREE EYE CARE** from a local physician and surgeon (ophthalmologist) who has volunteered services through the National Eye Care Project. For eligibility requirements and further information send your name, address and telephone number with a SASE to: *The Jewish Heritage for the Blind/Outreach Program/PO Box 336/Brooklyn, NY 11229*.

Need a wall treatment for a college student's bedroom? Write for a series of five free posters designed to **PREVENT DATE AND CAMPUS RAPE**. One includes the message "Against Her Will Is Against the Law." From *The Rape Treatment Center at Santa Monica Hospital/1250 16th St./Santa Monica, CA 90404*.

A helpful way to take the Sabbath on the road with you wherever you go, **THE SHABBAT KIT** includes Shabbat candles and holders, a kiddush cup, grape juice, challah cover, havdalah candle, spice box, *tzedakah* box, songster, all for \$18 from *USY Shabbat Kit/155 Fifth Ave., third fl./New York, NY 10010*.



Colorful fabric art **WEDDING CANOPIES** and tapestries for synagogues and newlyweds are available from the artist *Chuppahs by Shula/21 Capi Lane/Port Washington, NY 11050*.

JUDAICA ARTWORK, TEXTILES AND JEWELRY by Ita Aber can be seen this season at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, The Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, FL, and the Wexner Heritage Center, Columbus, OH. For further information contact *Ita Aber/One Fanshaw Ave./Yonkers, NY 10705*.

A catalog of holiday gifts with a wide range of **ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND CRUELTY FREE PRODUCTS** is available from *Ecco Bella/1-800-888-5320*.

The **JEWISH SOFTWARE CATALOG** contains listings for Hebrew word processors, clip art, educational programs, Torah texts, Hebrew calendars, holiday programs and games. \$14.95 plus \$1.95 shipping from *Springwells Company/PO Box 12346/Boulder, CO 80303*.

A three-week work-study **SUMMER VACATION IN ISRAEL FOR FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN**, based in the seaside resort town of Nahariya, is offered by *LEVI-B'nai B'rith Israel Commission/1640 Rhode Island Ave. NW/Washington, DC 20036*. Also find out about their program for North American high school students to spend a year at a Kibbutz high school in Northern Israel.

— compiled by Naomi Danis

LEARNING TO CHEER THE SICK

by Rachel Cowan

I learned much about visiting the sick during the year when my late husband Paul fought so valiantly against leukemia. I had always thought that visiting sick people was important, and I tried to do it when I could. But, like most Jews, I didn't see it as a mitzvah in the sense of "commandment"; instead I preferred to translate mitzvah as "good deed" — something a nice person did when she felt up to it.

The year I spent with Paul during his illness — six months of that time in hospitals, sleeping in his room many nights, keeping him company and boosting his spirits — made me understand the importance of the mitzvah. If people do not have visitors, they find it that much more difficult to mobilize themselves to heal, to engage in the drive to overcome their illness, or to live as fully as possible in the face of it.

I mastered the art of living in a hospital — I developed a strategy for getting space on the perpetually overcrowded elevators so as to get the food I was heating up in the microwave oven in the basement lounge back up to Paul before it cooled off. On the other hand, I learned a deep spiritual truth — that through love and attention to small details and through learning to listen and to hold hands in silence, you can help a person transform fear and terror into hope and occasional peace of mind.

What are small details?

Clothes: Paul hated hospital pajamas, hated lying in bed dressed unnaturally, so I went out and bought colorful sweat pants, sweat shirts, cheerful T-shirts, and he felt like a normal person.

Music: We discovered that some tape decks can play continually, and we learned

that some New Age music is very soothing. He played these tapes, and a guided meditation tape of Bernie Siegel's all night long, so he wasn't so frightened when he woke up in the middle of the night, and could eventually get back to sleep.

Food: Paul hated the airplane-packaged kosher meals at the hospital, so our friends cooked for him, and froze the food, and I brought it down and heated it in the microwave. Each meal he'd ask, "Who cooked this?" and then feel pleased to know he was eating Sharon's chicken, or Jackie's pea soup, or Doris's rice and beans.

Domestic routine: I brought a coffee pot and made him tea, poured him juice, cleaned up the room. I brought bright pillow covers and a pretty bedspread. I hung up all the cards he got and had a few photographs of the kids blown up to poster size for the walls. I constantly tidied up, and made him feel that he was living in *our* space, not *theirs*.

Books: Friends sent him books, or went out to buy him new ones. Several of us researched what books on the experience of cancer patients were helpful, which ones were too flaky, or too gloomy.

An interesting project: He worked on projects he cared about, so that he was a productive writer, not just a patient. He also invented a hospital project — a trivia quiz book on the 1960's which entertained him and our friends, and gave them all something cheerful and distracting to talk about.

A telephone tree: Patients and their families get overwhelmed by always having to report on their illness. Several



Rachel & Paul Cowan, 1987

Alex Goffry

friends organized telephone trees to let people know how things were developing, to answer questions people might have and to get people to donate blood, or to bring food, or to send cards. Paul came to feel that the perfect hospital call was a two minute chat, in which his friend Judy told him a bit of gossip, told him she was thinking about him, and hung up, without expecting him to rehearse his symptoms or take his emotional temperature.

Letting people help: Many people react to illness by drawing into themselves, feeling ashamed of their illness. They have always been used to the idea of having control; now they feel powerless. They are afraid of feeling dependent, of being needy. They are reluctant to ask other people for help. They keep telling people not to bother, they'll be all right. They should be encouraged to let people into their lives, to understand that people like to be able to help, if there are specific things that they can do.

Rituals and holiday celebrations: We celebrated Shabbat with challah and kiddush and a special meal every week. We even made Shabbat in the emergency room while waiting for the diagnosis — we shared a kosher hospital meal, and made kiddush over grape juice from a vending machine and a motzi over a piece of white bread. We also decorated the room for Sukkot, conducted two seders, ate blintzes on Shavuot, and davened with tapes of the High Holiday services. A friend came to blow the shofar. Again, all these celebrations helped Paul to retain his identity and integrity as a human being, not a patient. Paul laid tefillin every morning, too, looking out over the East River as the sun came up, sharing a quiet time in prayer before the nurses came in to begin the day's bustle of activity. Paul was able to maintain his firm belief that God was with him in that room, that God cared about him.

Rachel Cowan is a Reform rabbi and teacher. She is the author of Mixed Blessings (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1987) with her late husband Paul Cowan. This article was originally printed in In The News, the newsletter of the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim of Greater New York, and is reprinted with their permission.